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JOHN OF DAMASCUS

Extract from THE ASIATIC QUARTERLY.

JOHN OF DAMASCUS, by DOUGLAS AINSLIE. For anyone knowing the East, the most striking characteristic of this book is the success with which the author, who has never been there, puts himself in the place of Orientals, and the accuracy, on the whole, with which he makes them give an account of their different creeds. These, in fact, form the subject of the poem; and he has enshrined them in a picturesque story—a meeting brought about by him between a Christian saint, the Vizier of the contemporary Caliph, a Buddhist ascetic, and that mysterious personage, the Veiled Prophet of Khorassan. St. John the Damascene, the vicissitudes of whose previous life form an introduction, tells the tale of Barlaam and Joasaph, weaving into it an exposition of Christian doctrine. The Buddhist claims the legend, saying that it is but an adaptation of that of Gautama, whose life and teaching he then describes. When he has done, the Vizier speaks of Islam, drawing largely upon its folk-lore to complete the picture, and bringing it down to the end of the fourth caliphate. As he concludes the Veiled Prophet comes upon the scene and takes up the thread. He recalls the tragedy of Kerbela, with the events that led up to it, and the peculiar tenets of the Shiahhs concerning the Day of Judgment. The end of his story is practically that of the poem, the other characters merely adding a few words before they, like him, take their departure.

It must not be imagined for a moment that Mr. Ainslie's work is a succession of dry theological treatises; he has managed to give an idea of the different religions without ever being tiresome. He takes care not to make dogmas heavy by dwelling too long upon them, and he varies them with anecdotes and legends, so as to keep the reader constantly interested.

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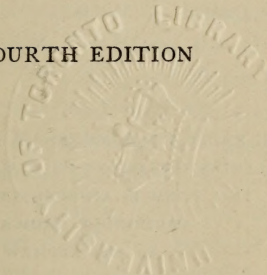
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JOHN OF DAMASCUS

BY

DOUGLAS AINSLIE

FOURTH EDITION

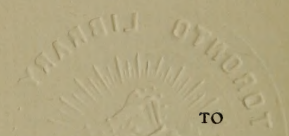


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TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR MOUNTSTUART
ELPHINSTONE GRANT DUFF, G.C.S.I., F.R.S.

THIS POEM IS AFFECTIONATELY AND
ADMIRINGLY DEDICATED

BY HIS NEPHEW
THE AUTHOR

PREFACE

THIS poem is an attempt to contrast Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam, the latter in its two forms, Sunni or orthodox, and Shiite, which is the faith of those who hold that Ali, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, and his descendants should have immediately succeeded Mohammad in the Kaliphate. Of the Sunni faith the Sultan is now the head; of the Shiah, the Shah of Persia. The marvellous Shiite passion play, "Hasan and Hosein," yearly enacted in our Indian dominions, as elsewhere, shows the vivacity of the great schism in Islam.

St. John of Damascus flourished toward the middle of the eighth century of our era. To him is attributed the legend of Barlaam and Joasaph, famous in all European languages throughout the Middle Ages, of which the Greek version is to be found under the saint's name in Migne's *Patrologia*. The history of this legend is, perhaps, the most curious of any that the world has ever known. Until about the middle of the nineteenth century, it was universally believed that the legend of Bar-

laam and Joasaph was that of a Christian saint who had converted to Christianity an Indian Prince. Under the names of Barlaam and Joasaph, the pair were on the list for canonization. The critical insight of Laboulaye first started the theory that the whole legend is a Christianized version of the original story of the Buddha, which had come overland from India by way of Persia. This hint once given, German erudition was not slow to prove beyond all shadow of doubt that this theory was correct. The names of Barlaam and Joasaph were thereupon erased from the Papal list of possible saints. To my mind it is absolutely certain that if Laboulaye had not set the learned world to work, Barlaam and Joasaph would eventually have been canonized. Apologists for the Vatican maintain that the strict investigation of the Devil's Advocate would have obviated this possibility. I beg leave to retain my conviction, and to express my regret that before Laboulaye spoke, the Pope had not taken that involuntary step toward the unification of all religions, which would have been the canonization of the Buddha.

The irregular fall of the rhymes in this long poem was devised as a possible alleviation of the monotony which I have felt in reading poems of equal length and mathematical regularity. The occasional breaks in the line, and the rare blank

verses are introduced as a means of drawing attention to some capital event, such as the Great Enlightenment of the Buddha. Assonance has also sometimes been placed for rhyme, for the reason that, as the discord in music, so an occasional absence of the full rhyme is not unpleasant to my ear. Many, I know, held a contrary opinion. Neither they nor I are responsible for our different reactions from sound.

DOUGLAS AINSLIE.

*Athenæum Club, Pall Mall,
March, 1906.*

*"Worshipper of the Sun and Moon
and the evening star this people was,
before we brought the priceless boon
and held before its eyes the Cross."*

*Thus speak the priests of every creed
and the Old Gods perish as is due,
and the New triumph, till indeed
these new are old and men make new.
But always as the old creed wanes,
her votaries will linger yet,
and though Lord Christ in Heaven reigns
Queen Venus they will not forget.
See them steal forth at still of eve,
alert while all the world is sleeping;
see the stained altar, see them weave
her mystic wreaths while she is peeping
through the pale cloud. Just so one day
the tale of Christ a tale of Fairy
to the new men will seem when they
with Venus shall have placed our Mary
among the myths of old : they smile
handling the crown of thorns ; for them
the Christian legend will beguile*

*an idle hour, the azure hem
of Mary's robe, the Cherubim,
the glistening glories of the sainted
are but old fancies growing dim
as fade the marvels Vinci painted.*

*Thus of the world in man's first youth;
he wanders on until arrested
he stands before the temple Truth
built on the hill-top olive-crested.
He kneels, and glowing there between
the white slim columns of her shrine;
perfect, implacable, serene,
dawns upon him the queen divine.
Then says the world: "An empty shell
for the true goddess you have taken;
long ages past the old faith fell
and the marble temple was forsaken;
you are a man now, and behold
these things are really worth the scheming:
science and power and art and gold
and women fairer than your dreaming."
And as the pagan with the priest
so manhood spurns his boyhood's god,
vowing he cares nor knows the least
where winds the hilly path he trod.
But when the field of youth is mown
and earlier his evening closes,*

*Lo ! he steals trembling forth alone
to deck the scornèd shrine with roses,
and weeping in the sacred place,
see him recant his blasphemies :
iron-grey his hair and in his face
engraven the world's miseries.*

*O goddess, grant him kneeling here
pilgrim and penitent of youth,
vision ineffable to appear—
Art and Religion, Love and Truth.*

ERRATA

- P. 76, l. 2, *for* "speak" *read* "speaks."
- P. 80, l. 19, *for* "himself, to others gave" *read*
"himself, to others ever gave."
- P. 140, l. 3, *for* "soulless" *read* "weakling."
- P. 159, l. 30, *delete the word* "and."
- P. 176, l. 22, *delete the word* "while."
- P. 304, l. 8, *delete comma.*
- P. 304, l. 10, *delete query and read comma in*
place.
- P. 318, l. 18, *delete the word* "one."

PART I

JOHN OF DAMASCUS

ARGUMENT

THE subject proposed—the monastery of Mar Sabas described—the dirge of John Mansour, the Damascene—Damascus, its Christian and Mohammedan epochs—Sergius, father of John of Damascus, one of the Christian servants of the Mohammedan Kaliphs—Sergius delivers a Christian monk, Cosmas, from slavery—Cosmas becomes the teacher of John Mansour; afterwards known to the Christian world as John of Damascus—John succeeds his father Sergius—John is made chief minister—Leo, the Isaurian Emperor of the East, issues the edicts against the worship of the Trinity by means of images or pictures—John of Damascus issues a defence of images, and violently opposes the ecclesiastical policy of Leo—Leo causes a letter to be forged purporting to have been sent to him by John of Damascus—this letter contains treasonous proposals, and is sent to the Kaliph—the Kaliph is deceived—John Mansour is punished—a miracle performed by the Blessed Virgin herself—John Mansour retires to the monastery of Mar Sabas—he submits to the severe rule of monk Isumbrand—he breaks one of its clauses by composing the dirge quoted at the beginning of the poem—he is sent to Damascus on foot as penance—he is recognised by Al Zobeir, the Mohammedan, his successor as Chief Minister—Al Zobeir entertains him—John of Damascus offers to tell the story of the Christian saints Barlaam and Joasaph.

Now who with me will leave for a while
this age of Mammon, vulgar, vile,
and with my hand for guide in his
glide back the sleeping centuries?
Come, loose thy hold of all thy cares
and all thy pleasures, merely snares
to stay the mind that should be free.
Time, what is time and what are we,
and wherefore chained to the hours that be?
Come, shake thy golden locks, dear friend,
and shaking, through thy being send
a message saying: "This the day
I step a thousand years away
and pass a thousand leagues to the land
where, as though cradled in the sand,
two great religions of the world
first waxed and spread, till they enfurled
more than a half humanity:"
So come with me to Palestine,
where 'twixt Damascus and divine
Jerusalem our stay will be;
in the valley of Kidron, near the shore
of the lake which the very birds abhor,
sinking with shivering wings from the air,
which is heavy with poison everywhere,
to float quite dead upon those waves
await for them like crystal graves—
the waves of the Lake Asphaltites,
the green, salt waves of the Dead Sea.
But high on the rocks above us see,
placed like an eagle's eyrie, is
the Laura of the Mar Sabas,
of which that saint the founder was.
To-day is but as yesterday,
and a thousand years as they pass away

scarce furrow once the brow of the hill,
and scarce the brooding valley fill
with any noticeable change;
as though this special point of the earth
did garner thoughts beyond the range
of time and space, of death and birth.
'Twas hither that Saint Sabas fled
for refuge in the "Valley of Fire"
from the worse pangs of wild desire,
and here the monk's true life he led.
But not of him do we stay to tell,
nor of the lion who loved him well,
and shared awhile his rocky cell;
and hardly may swallow or song alight
by those high caves, where dwelt St. John,
Arcadius, Xenophon, brethren three,
far beyond hearing yet each in sight;
and all their lives, when the first sun shone,
waved greetings each for the day to be,
silent for ever across the abyss:
we flit, for we may not hover o'er this,
and haste to the time when the Laura stood,
a power for evil and for good,
like all extreme that is.

Twin towers and mighty buttresses,
domes, battlements, and staircases,
support the building as it leans
toward the dismal, deep ravines
which serve the Kidron for a bed;
and Nature all around is dead,
save for the golden grackle's cry
or the wolf's howl; no single flower
is there to shadow hour by hour
the slow sun's progress over the sky:
white cliffs and yellow, all is dead
without, within, save overhead

sad singing, hark ! for 'tis a dirge
rises and falls like the sea's surge :—

*Take the last kiss, the last for ever,
you and your friend to-day must sever—
he passeth onward to the tomb ;
farewell he bids to earthly pleasure,
to pains of earth farewell for ever ;
but render thanks amid your gloom,
he hath of all good things the best,
he passeth to eternal rest.*

*Take the last kiss, the last for ever.
Lo ! the last word of life is spoken,
the golden vessel lieth broken ;
forth from her tabernacle flown
wingeth the soul her way alone.*

*Take the last kiss, the last for ever.
What is our life ? a fading flower ;
the dewdrops of the dawning hour
pass not more speedily away.*

*Take the last kiss, the last for ever.
Come gaze upon the tombs to-day
where youth and beauty withered lie
as grass of summer utterly.*

*Take the last kiss, the last for ever.
So while our eyes with tears grow dim,
come let us plead to Christ for him,
and weeping o'er the dead together
take the last kiss, the last for ever.*

So ends the singing ye know so well,
and 'tis of the poet that I would tell,
of John Mansour the Damascene,
Chrysoroas, “ he of the golden flow,”
true poet, if saint has ever been,
and saint as true as poet, I ween ;

this by God's help I'll show.

But first, sweet lady, I'd crave your grace
to grant me leave for a moment's space—
(nay, blind me not with thy radiant face)—
crave freedom for rhyme that rings
true to itself and sighs or sings ;
now free, now prisoned in the throats
of birds who careless give their notes,
according to a harmony
that in the listener first must be.

Now, having told of the dirge and the sea,
spread wings again and pass with me
northward and backward to the place
where John the Doctor of Christian Art
loved, lived, and suffered a little space,
ere for his great and bleeding heart
he found true solace in life apart
from the suns and the storms of history,
on these bare cliffs, by this Dead Sea.

Through seven miles of forest fair
Damascus lies and drinks her fill
of those cold torrents from the hill,
Barrada, Phege ; streams that were
famous ere in her yellow glass
first peered the seven-crowned infant Rome
new crept from out her wolfish womb.
Heroes and kings, she has seen all pass,
Damascus City of Pomegranates,
City of Gardens, and now, though she
is older far than all towns that be,
even yet through her carven gates
life ebbs, life flows ; no memories climb
upward to that dim point of time
when Uz the first foundations laid ;
nor yet shall we stay our flight to tell
of Abraham nor of Israel,

of Naaman nor his maid :
nor yet may we hover over the day
Tiglath-Pileser led away
to Kir the Damascenes ;
and here the end of her youth we see
when the rest of the world began to be,
an end of the Bible scenes.
Time waxed, time waned, kings went, kings came,
and Alexander's mighty name
split into fragments like a gem,
and the crowd struggles and gathers them ;
but always upon the crest of time
Damascus sailed, and she always came
equal with things sublime.
City of Pomegranates, come tell
what thine old stones must know so well ;
how looked young Pompey as he rode
to choose some palace for abode
along the street called Straight ?—
He who brought Syria under the sway
of the Roman babe of yesterday ?—
“ Hardly he deigned to turn aside
the head that won the world to bride,
crisp-curved, supreme, elate.
He left me by the eastern gate,
he rode to rend the veil,
and face to face with Israel's God
not his the gaze to quail.”
But mightier steps than his have trod
these ancient stones, and the breach in the wall
still shews where he who was Saul and was Paul
must fly for his mission's sake.
(Refounder of the Christian world,
who in your puissant grasp did take
the soft and soothing gospel furled
in the seamless robe, did crush and turn

that flower-strown script to fires that burn,
 melt and refashion and make stern,
 as a wrought gate of piercèd iron,
 the faith which doth our world environ.
 Ah, carven gates, through which we peer
 to count the crowns the Pontiffs wear,
 circlewise sitting backward there
 to guard the key which lies them near,
 ruddy with rust, and blood-flecks stain
 the lock our fingers try in vain !
 Methinks you melt again, and lo
 those iron flowers Paul carved do flow
 back to the daisy, and a child
 leads back the Lamb, from us beguiled.)
 Five hundred years went gliding by,
 and the Christians reigned when the old gods
 waned,
 till Heraclius tottered on his throne
 in evil health, whose hand alone
 might with the scimitared monster vie
 which from the south is drawing nigh.
 Columns of desert dust revolving
 across the astonished earth reveal
 Mohammad, central column of all,
 man's sins in the one God absolving,
 if but he lose his life in arms :
 " Think not of battle's grievous harms—
 all wounds in Paradise will heal
 tended by houris fair and tall,
 unknown of man or of any jinn."
 " I am the tower where wisdom dwells,
 Ali the gate to enter in :"
 Thus spake the Prophet, but fate spells
 a different destiny, and the sword
 of Syria, Amrou's subtle tongue,
 the pierced Koran and the vile fraud

of the judgment given, the empire wrung
 from the Bayard¹ of Islam, and the Plain
 drank of his grandchild's blood, Hosein.
 Khalid, Obeidah, who can stay?
 Werdan, Heraclius turned to clay?—
 Damascus falls, and the white and the green
 wave from the time-worn walls, serene,
 and the mule of Syria Muavia
 Lord of all Islam governed here
 from the City of Gardens, and the God
 of Islam triumphed where Islam trod.
 Westward to Egypt, eastward ho,
 borne on the winds the sons of the sand
 bear death or the faith wherever they go;
 scimitar drawn and the Book in hand,
 they blot the boundaries of the land
 where Tigris and Euphrates flow,
 and the last of the Sassanides
 must fall, a suppliant, on his knees.
 Through palaces of Karmathian kings
 the desert cloud its passage wings,
 o'erwhelming all, and the Indian streams
 must flicker back the scimitar's gleams;
 Moultan, Ferghana, Samarcand,
 Kashgar; and on the western land
 as heavily lies Islam's hand,
 even to Segelmessa, where
 gnomes lay gold by the merchant's ware.
 Thus Islam won and still doth keep,
 nor like the whirling pillar of sand
 falls with the wind nor sinks to sleep.

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"Never before so splendid was
 Our ancient city"; the fountains say,

¹ Ali.

as in the marble courts they play
and the white doves of peace do rove
from orange grove to orange grove.
Bright gleamed the Crescent, but still the Cross,
though dimmed and dinted, yet remained,
for what could the sons of the desert do
in a world so old, to them so new?
They sought the help of the sect disdained ;
and always the great Muavia placed
by his side at the council and the feast
some Christian whose wit and wisdom graced
and tempered the Arab fire at least.
Then the day came that he must die,
and in the Tomb of the Little Gate
Muavia sleeps, and by him lie
Mohammad's wives and he whose pages
carry his doings down the ages,
Ibn Asaker, and those that came
thereafter of the Ommyad name,
Walid and Hisham and Merwan,
fulfilled the use their sire began ;
on the horns of the Crescent shines the Cross ;
Akhtal, the Christian, robed in gold,
amazed Islam must behold
crowned " Kaliph's poet " since he was
best spokesman for the silent rose
which in Damascus garden blows.
And Walid, enraged at a verse that pricks
his pillowed pleasure, pierces and sticks
through with his arrows the Koran.
" For, ' Woe to the proud rebellious man,'
you cry ; well, wait till the Judgment day
and then call out to your Lord if you may
' 'Twas Walid pierced me ; I said him, Nay.' "

" Scarce in His Father's bosom lies

Our Saviour Christ seven hundred year ;
scarce eighty since their prophet flies
with Israfil for charioteer,
when thus the pagans reappear,
and Walid comes to flout and jeer,"
mused Sergius the Logothete,
as his mule bore him along the street
(this Sergius was a Christian,
yet served the Kaliph as Christians can).
Sudden the mule stops where a crowd
is chaffering long, is chaffering loud,
for a Christian monk, in the narrow space
ere the street becomes the market-place.
"What think you, friend, will the old monk grace
my harem's door?" says one ; "more sure
your garden as a rare manure."
This Sergius heard, and Cosmas saw
in his eye was pity, and hope once more
throbbed to his heart with the life-blood.
And, "Gracious lord," he cried in Greek,
"I am Cosmas monk, and I cannot speak
the Saracen speech, nor shew, as I would,
the treasures I bear from Sicily ;
for I am learned in all the lore
which came with the Christ and came before :
Plotinus, Porphyry live in me,
Plato is mine, and all the light
which gave to the world the Stagyrityte."
Then Sergius answered him back in Greek :
"Old man, you need fear no more ;
for though you have lied, and the names you speak
be all your knowledge, I know how sore
on your frail limbs this iron's weight,
and sad as a slave-youth seems, not one
of all the sad sights under the sun
is sadder than age at odds with fate ;

but if truth you tell, you shall guide my son
through all the mazes of Plato's school."
Then Cosmas was unchained and led
forth, and upon a sturdy mule
his saviour placed him, and little was said
as they passed beneath the archway cool ;
for now well-nigh the monk was dead,
scarce having slept since from his bed
the Saracens dragged him, in Syracuse.
But soon good fare and generous wine,
and the smiles of Sergius and gentle use
(these last twain, healers most divine),
coaxed back the heart to work again,
and drove the blood to the restless brain,
and Sergius gently bade him tell
of those wise Greeks he loved so well.
Then Cosmas' eyes flashed bright, as he
launched forth on that great history ;
and Sergius hearkened as he told
of those who in their thoughts were bold
as ever mariner upon sea ;
the admirals they of philosophy ;
how first in the grey Greek morn of thought
rose Heraclitus, and did show
that nought remains and all things flow :
" Not twice can you nor can any go
over the same stream ;" this he taught.
And how Parmenides said : " Not so,
for thought and being are the same,
and true things *are*, but the false *appear* ;
and to *know* well is not to *dream*,
and the one whole is pure and clear
like a vast crystal colourless sphere
at rest in the heavens ;"—and much more
which teased the wit of Sergius sore ;
so that he clapped his hands, and slaves

brought sherbet in golden bowls, and cream
and store of roses, and shook staves
with flapping arras so to seem
as though a real wind did blow.
But scarcely did Cosmas touch the bowl
with eager lips on the overflow,
for Zeno trembled in his soul.
He would tell the truth, he would tell the whole,
and prove to the noble logothete
that the monk Cosmas was worth his meat.
“Yea, Zeno and Parmenides”—
went Cosmas on; but Sergius waves
to a slim youth among his slaves,
and “Zeno and Parmenides”—
Cosmas begins again forlorn;
but the hanging curtains are withdrawn,
and, bowing lowly to the ground,
then bounding with an antelope’s bound,
a boy like budding April springs
all youth upon them, and his arms
round his old father’s neck he flings,
triumphant in his boyhood’s charms.
“My son, he is my only son,”
cries Sergius, when at last he is free;
“his mother left this only one
to be a link ’twixt her and me.
Is he not beautiful?—Just so
the angels look, as to and fro
they wing their way round Heaven’s throne,
save that perchance their locks may glow
with light that shines from God alone.
But John’s hair is golden, and such eyes
saw you ever on this side Paradise?”
Old Cosmas smiled, and stroked the hair
of the fair child, who had drawn near
and gazed upon him without fear.

Then the monk gathered into heads
the wandering skein of ravelled threads,
and told how Zeno had undone,
had spun again, again unspun
all theories of identity ;
so that for him, you, I and he
are or are not indifferently.
He conjured up that day when all
the living wits of the world did meet
at the great Athenian festival :
here Zeno and Parmenides greet
our Plato's many-coloured mind,
and to all the elder sophist said,
Zeno, the younger, bowed his head :
“ We move of course, but then we find
that we can only *say* we move
from point to point and at each point rest ;
for all these points are breast to breast ;
Achilles cannot catch the sloth,
the arrow that flies is motionless,
the falling tower may seem to move
as does my tongue, but none the less
the sage well knows how still are both.”
And hence the monk to another sage
of ancient Greece drew near, and the child
by his kind eyes and speech beguiled,
approached and sat at the teacher's feet ;
whereat cried Sergius : “ I engage
you Cosmas lead my son to greet
those lords of thought, and since 'tis meet
that a freeman teach my son the Greek,
straightway I will the Kaliph seek,
and ask for you your liberty.”
Then Sergius rose and “ Speedily
I come again,” he cried, and as
the curtains of the portal fell

upon the father, 'gan to tell
the monk of dim Pythagoras.
Meeting of night and day, I ween :
Cosmas in his dark cloak, and the child,
like a cherub down from heaven beguiled,
and above their heads the deep dark green
of the orange trees and the palms in rows,
and the long-stretching even lines
of the marble steps and the wheeling crows
against heaven's blue depths overhead.
And hardly the child knows, but divines
the old dim creed, that none are dead,
but passed from one form to another,
and each by the last life he led
punished or blessèd in some other ;
and how we flit from star to star,
and have known all, but nought abides,
as the sand washed by the great tides ;
and hence the good monk wandered far.
Now Sergius returns, and liberty
upbeareth Cosmas on her wings.
But still with the child he stands, while he
swears that until his last day brings
for him farewell to all earthly things,
true to his duties he will be,
and all he knows of the ancient school,
and all the Christian too, will lay
before the bright-eyed boy, nor stay
till all his doubts are cleared away
and his life fixed in the Christian rule,
“ for always in the best of the Greek
we hear the coming Saviour speak.”
The pact was made, and Cosmas stayed,
and with a mighty love of the truth
the old monk taught the willing youth.
And Cosmas found that Athena's light

glowed in John's eyes, so blue so bright ;
for all he taught was stored away
beneath the forehead's gold-curled rings ;
nor could aught crabbed diction stay
the boy's thirst to drink up the springs
which flow from distant Athens there
where the name of Christ makes clear the air.
Diophantus and the Ptolemies,
algebra and geometry,
and the gold dust of truth that lies
where men have striven hard to see :
but most of all Pythagoras
among the ancient sages was
that one whose vivid eagle sight
Cosmas delighted to reveal
in glimpses of transcendent light
to the bright boy whose will could feel
and memory seize upon a thought
vaster as yet than could be brought
within full conscience of the brain.
Thus several years they dwelt together
careless almost of the outside weather—
scarce knowing what vizier might reign
for a moment in the Kaliph's train,
till the day came that Cosmas died.
Full twenty hours did John abide
by the dead semblance of his friend ;
then, for he knew his grief could lend
no joy to the spirit passed away,
John harkened to his father's prayer,
and thenceforth followed everywhere
the business of the logothete,
and oft-times passed nigh half the day
copying and counting, making neat
columns of figures, and the crowd
of dusty things which like a cloud

hang round the central pulse of power.
Thus happened it that oft the son
filled the fair place his sire had won,
passed with the Kaliph many an hour,
and the little John grew John Mansour ;
and none at the court was known so sure
alike in lesser things as great.
Then clanged again the bell of fate,
and Sergius followed on the way
which Cosmas took five years before.
And Mansour sorrowed long and sore
for the father he should see no more.
But grief must cease, and tears must stay,
ere the staff gripped in willing hand
will help the traveller to the land.
Soon came word from the Kaliph's grace
that he should fill a higher place
than ever Christian filled before :
Mansour was named chief councillor.
And now the straining reins of power
lay in John's hand, for the Kaliph knew
that the Christian John was firm and true
as Sergius in the years gone by.
" If this be so, then what care I
if he worship Christ as the deity
equal with Allah, and Miriam,¹
sister of Moses, child of Imram,
place with his god in Paradise.
For certain God Mansour will damn,
yet *now* is the Christian witty and wise
and true to *me*, though he worship lies."
Thus all was well till Leo roared
against the worship of the Lord
in form of picture, shrine or saint :
" God is no idol daubed with paint."

¹ Virgin Mary.

Such speech Mansour would not endure
against the image and semblance fair
of God made beautiful everywhere ;
so in his hand he took the pen,
and in words of splendour and eloquence
bade the Christian world resist his power
who would destroy the gracious presence
of God made visible to men.

Then waxed Mansour from hour to hour ;
then raged the Emperor in his heart,
and subtly, since he did not dare
slay John while in the Kaliph's care,
commands his scribes with all their art
a semblance of John's script prepare ;
wherein he seems to sign away
allegiance to his Saracen Lord.

"Weak is the Saracen guard,"—thus ran
the lying script,—“and on a day
if so you will it, shall your sword
into Damascus find a way :
five hundred men at arms I can
lead secretly within the walls :
and with Walid his empire falls.”

Thus and much more for many a page
ran the epistle, that he might know
Mansour for traitor and for foe.

Then fell the Kaliph in a rage,
and ere the first wild gust was spent
called for Mansour, who all in vain
pleaded the forgery, and revealed
the hatred in the script concealed,
which planned his ruin ; but “Not again
will the Kaliph in the ambush fall :
John wrote the treason, and the hand
which did the deed the brain has planned
must perish, perish also all

the power and place he once did own."

The deed was done, and John alone
prayed to the Virgin that the pain
might cease and the arm come whole again.

Then sick at heart, of praying tired,
John fell to sleep, and dreamed of her
to whom but now he had raised his prayer.
And as he dreamed there came, attired
in blue cœrulean, on a cloud,
which as she went did move with her,
compassed with heavenly light about,
and cherubs flitting round her head,
the Mother of Christ, and sweetly said :

"John, your prayer is heard,
John, your arm is healed,
John, in light revealed,
See me, hear the word."

Then John awakened from his sleep,
and found his arm whole as before
the cruel sword in his blood did steep,
save where a thin red circle bore
one witness to the Faith the more.

Full soon the Kaliph cries again :

"Where is Mansour? Must Islam rue
his punishment since none of you
can match the subtle Christian's brain?
Go bring the traitor to our view."

So John was brought, and the Kaliph saw
his arm as whole as it was before.

Then wild indeed was the Moslem's rage,
and "What," he cried, "do my slaves engage
to spare the punishment when due?
Go fetch the soldier who should hew
the right arm off as his shall too."

They led him in, and when he saw
John's arm come whole, he fell on the floor,
and cried with a mighty voice : " Some jinn
hath compact with this man of sin ;
I swear, most noble lord, with a blow
Mansour his arm fell off, and I know
the place exact where I struck, can show "—
but here John bared his arm, and the rim
revealed the miracle wrought on him.
Then the Kaliph turned him and hid his face
and communed with his soul a space.
At length he said : " To you, Mansour,
my servant, trusty, tried and sure ;
hereby I grant the wealth I took,
and all the lands : nor shall I brook
again the lies that any send
against my servant, councillor, friend ;
yea if any dare to speak one word
against Mansour, that man hath heard
his own death sentence in his lies,
and ere their echo cease he dies.
John Mansour, you I hereby raise
with me above all blame or praise
of this my court ; and I pray of you
pardon for hasty action due
to the vile scheming of a foe.
Hear all the world : I will it so."
Then John bowed low before the throne,
and thanked the Kaliph for justice done :
" But none of the splendours you offer me, none
can I accept, though far beyond
the worth of one who was overfond
of this world's empty bauble show.
Now at your hands, O gracious lord,
one boon I crave : that I may retire
to the Laura by the Kidron's flow

Mar Saba in the Valley of Fire,
where I may worship and record
the sweet descending vision of Love
which has healed me here in anguish dire—
Mary the Mother from above.”

Then the Kaliph rose from his silver throne,
and came to the place where stood St. John,
and drawing a gold chain from his neck,
alive with ruby and chalcedon,
threw it the saint's bent neck upon,
and cried : “ O friend, you can little reck
how great my love and how great my loss,
if thus, as you say, you yet will cross
my purpose of all things good for you.
But as you will, so shall you do.

Only I ask if again you see
the vision of Miriam, plead for me.”

Then the saint in short but earnest speech
talked with the Kaliph of things of state,
and bade farewell to his friends, and each
received a share of his new-found wealth,
and joyfully penniless, more great
than ever before, by the eastern gate,
in a monk's robe, St. John, by stealth
crept out at night to join the choir
of the monks who serve in the Valley of Fire.

“ Who knocks thus deep in the night below ?
Be thou friend or be thou foe,
depart, depart in peace,” cried one,
as at the postern knocked St. John.

“ Fear not at all, a friend am I,
John of Damascus, come to crave
such succour as your monks vouchsafe
in the name of Christ and Charity ;
therefore descend.” When the watcher heard

the name of the traveller, soon was stirred
in every part that place of stone,
as in a church at the first deep tone
of the organ lesser thoughts must fly,
and our thoughts soar with the sound on high.
The Abbot opened to St. John,
and all alike the monks would strive
to serve the greatest saint alive
(for so they held him who did dare
beard Leo in his lion's lair),
to serve an it were but a menial part
for the "Doctor of the Christian Art."
But the more they worshipped at his feet,
the more John craved for the discipline
which yet he lacked ere he could win
his way to the side of the Paraclete.
But none of the monks would undertake
such a task as the ruling of the man
who, ere his monk's life even began,
had braved an emperor on his throne,
had ruled o'er Islam as his own,
for whose sweet, ardent sufferings' sake
Mary the Mother of God came down,
all radiant in her pale blue gown,
and spake with him and healed his wound;
"And you may see the very rim
where her gentle fingers tended him,
left as a sign when his arm came sound."
Now who would dare as much as even
dispute with one who hath been in Heaven?
much less by narrow monkish rule
presume to keep a saint in school?
Then John, as the throng of monks stood near,
and all would serve, but none command,
asked if the Laura all were here?
Then one made answer: "Isumbrand,

old and decrepid, dwells alone,
nor ever leaves his cell of stone.”
“Pray bring me to him,” said St. John.
So upward from terrace to terrace they climb,
saint and monks in a thin brown line,
and at length on the topmost ridge they stand,
panting for breath, and “Isumbrand,”
cries one and raps at the closed cell door.
“Enter by Christ and by Mary’s grace,”
answers the old monk’s voice within
(and always he knelt and muttered o’er
the prayer that should purge his soul of sin—
some old sin done when the wrinkled face
was bright as the glow of his silver shield,
and the wild blood hummed and the will must yield).
Then John drew near and bowed him low,
and the brother monks retired below.
John said : “Perchance you have heard my name,
known well enough in the world, till I came
to free my soul of its thousand sins
here where the chastened spirit wins
its heavenly way by penance due ;
obedience and those other laws,
made for the weal of him who adores
Christ and his rule ; I pray of you
to guide me sternly, Isumbrand,
for here a sinful monk I stand,
and cry in vain for firm control :
those others all would kiss my hand,
and kissing damn my ruined soul.
Oh ! issue but a firm command,
and as your slave in Christ I toil,
and by your help my soul assoil.”
Then John fell down and thanked the Lord
who at length had heard his prayer ;
and when he arose the aged monk

was standing waiting there.
And, "Thou shalt utter not one word,
thou of the golden flow
of speech and pen, and the pleasure drunk
from the eyes and the listening mouths of men,
charmed in thy puissant presence and sunk,
henceforth thou shalt never know.
But thou shalt pray in penitence
for thy dead deadly sins,
and when the moon beams and the world dreams
not then shalt thou rest, not then,
but by vigil and prayer shalt aye mount the stair
which heavenward leadeth hence.
And if these rules thou disobey,
from my cell thou shalt be expelled straightway."
"Good is not good unless well done,"
said John (and sure never beneath the sun,
arrayed against the power of night,
loomed brighter the legions of the light.
Great councillor with the winged crown
of power and the violet crown
of empery in the world of words,
these and the rest he will hurl them down
those rugged rocks, aye let them drown
where fall the very passing birds :
in the salt waves of the Dead Sea).
Thus and thus for many a day
works and strives the saint alway :
works at vile tasks, and never a word
through the bars of his golden¹ lips is heard ;
until the day when Thomas died ;
him the monks loved (and well betide
his soul which doth with God abide).
The monks they loved him very well,
and all that night and that day could tell

¹ Chrysoroas.

no other tale than the things he said,
and the things that had pleased their brother dead.
Now the fame of John as a poet came
wafted with him like tongues of flame,
and as they prayed and moaned full sore,
one of them cried : " Since nevermore
we may see our brother in the Lord,
let us make a dirge, and let every word
be cunningly placed, and let the whole
rise like a temple to his soul.

Then one said : " Nay, if he dared disobey
once in the world the stern behest,
our John the poet could make the best
of any dirge, since to his rest
St. Sabas passed among the blest."

Therefore they came with suppliant airs
to John as he toiled on the steep stone stairs,
bearing the water for the cell
of Isumbrand, and : " We know well
your penance of silence, brother John ;
but now is Thomas passed away,
him whom we loved, and we would say
how bright for us his presence shone,
how dark these walls since he has gone ;
but alas no skill in verse have we,
so songless and dirgeless must he be
laid to his rest to-morrow morn ;
unless of your great love and wit
some song of mourning shall be born,
which shall meet his soul and fly with it.
Ah ! grant our prayer, by the sacred eyes
of Mary Mother, sweet and wise."

Thus spoke the monk, and the others drew
nearer the saint as he ceased to climb
the steep stone steps, and thoughtful grew
his eyes, and furrowed the brow sublime.

But he answered nothing at that time,
save with a bow and a half smile,
as upward again he 'gan to climb,
musing, musing all the while.
Soon images rose, and the very words
swarmed all around like travelling birds
that seek the beacon's golden light,
which pierces through the gloom of night.
Then suddenly to an end he brought
his work, and the devious ways of thought
shewed in his brain they would converge
into the music of the dirge,
which since his day men sing alway
to speed the soul upon its way.
That very noon they sung the same,
and the sound of the singing rose like flame
upward to the hard bare cell
where Isumbrand with John did dwell.
"What dirge is singing there below?"
asks Isumbrand, as his fingers pleat
the strands of the basket at his feet;
"'tis strange the words I should not know,
who came here sixty years ago.
A noble dirge it is; I shall pray
the Abbot, on my burial day
an it please him, to let sing the same."
Then over the face of the saint there came,
first of his life, a blush of shame:
"I wrote the dirge: be mine the blame."
Isumbrand rose and spake no word,
but stretched his arm and pointed down
where yet the melody was heard.
The saint obeyed, and with bowed head
passed out—and downward, ever down
the rock-hewn staircase he must tread,
thus "driven forth from Paradise."

Anguished he seeks the chapel gaunt,
where the monks meet him, and his chaunt
speeds always heavenward with the soul,
first of the million souls that flies,
buoyed on such wings to its last goal.
The monks crowd round, and strive to soothe
with compliments and phrases smooth
Mansour in sorrow ; but aye he cries,
“ I am driven forth from Paradise.”
At last, one, bolder than the rest,
saith : “ Brother, for your dirge’s sake
which wafteth Thomas on his way,
lo now I climb to the Laura’s crest,
and with Isumbrand your peace will make,
or at the least some solace lay
on your sad soul if so I may.”
His music ceased to cleave the air
as the saint knelt in silent prayer,
and the monks stood wondering wistfully
what the mind of Isumbrand would be.
Sudden the listeners’ heads are leaned.
“ ’Tis James descending from Isumbrand,”
circles the whisper, and now John may
rise from the stones and cease to pray,
for the final answer is on its way
to the heart of gold from the heart of clay.
He enters, and down the bare cold walls
shivers the message that appals.
“ John the sinner, so-called the saint,
waxen will and heart all faint ;
hear the penance which you must do
ere Isumbrand will govern you.
Some fifty leagues as I think divide
John the vizier from the town of his pride
twelve baskets lie complete in my cell,
each worth a silver piece at the most.

Hence, then, vile sinner, fulfil thy boast ;
pride of the pagan, poet of hell :
speed to Damascus, and straightway sell
each of the baskets at pieces three,
nor till they are sold return to me."

Who stands there in the street called Straight,
stands and calls like a figure of fate,
" Baskets to sell ? " was ever seen
a monk more foul, of more piteous mien ?
Come tell us, monk, now who are you
that thrive so ill 'neath the rule of the Jew ?
" I come from the Laura upon the Hill,
my name is John, and I here fulfil
the righteous penance for my sin."
" And what, sir monk, may that have been ? "
" Good friend, an I told, you would not see
the exceeding great enormity
of the evil thing which I have done,
but *these*, I must sell them every one,
ere I may dare return again
to purge the rest of my merited pain."
He points to the baskets piled on high,
and the crowd of idlers draws more nigh.
Says one : " The price of that wicker crate ? "
" Three pieces of silver." " Crazy pate !
For two of copper I'd easily buy
two better than yours ; but I see, you'd try
to cozen the faithful, Christian hound ! "
At this the loiterers gathered around,
bronze-faced Syrians, and they stare
at the monk as he stands by his high-priced ware.
" And a copper piece is the most I would pay
to see him and his baskets carried away,"
shouts one, and his fellows jostle and laugh

at the bright-eyed monk as he leans on his staff,
silent, serene ; though the cruel ray
of the Syrian sun can find a way
through the dark cloak dusty with many a mile :
round him the rabble presses, vile.
Sudden a shout, " Al Zobeir ! "
All vanish melted away with fear,
and alone he stands in the street called Straight,
John Mansour, councillor of state,
Friend of the Kaliph once, but now
an humble monk, of strenuous brow.
Slowly the white ass draws more near,
whereon rides great Al Zobeir,
who of high places holds the same
as did Mansour ere yet his name
rose to St. John, as smoke to flame.
If he cast but a glance across the street
perchance two old friends' eyes will meet.
" Wherefore those baskets piled on high ?
and who is the monk that stands them by ? "
asks Zobeir, and his servants speed.
" His name is John, and he comes "—but here
John Mansour and Al Zobeir
in one another's eyes had read
sweet memory of the old days dead.
Straight from his ass Al Zobeir leapt,
and cried, " What strange tryst have you kept
in this strange guise, with this strange ware ? "
" I come from the Laura of St. Sabas,
and thither again I hope to pass
when all these baskets have been sold. "
" I buy them all, old friend ; here's gold.
Now come " (he mounted down from his beast),
" your vow's performed ; with me at least
abide until the day be done,
take rest and refuge from the sun.

You know my palace hid in the trees,
and the fountains and marble and seats of ease,
spread round the green, cool place.
How often have we pondered there
on things to come and things that were ;
but now, though you are far away—
you will yet set free for a friend one day.”
Bright smiled St. John through his weary dust,
and, “ Come what may, we are bound to trust
old friends, though the world be new ;
so far away am I now from where
we dwelt in thought, that I hardly dare
tread again the path that I trod with you.
But you yourself are the best of the past,
and thoughts may change but the heart doth last ;
so fare I with you and will stay
till daybreak of the coming day ;
for, truth to tell, my head doth swim,
my senses all seem blurred and dim ;
and had you not come at need, dear friend,
my mission with my life had end.”
So now they pass upon their way,
and heads are turned and steps must stay
to see on foot the great Vizier
—on foot the great prince Zobeir—
and on his ass a strange foul friar,
for none did know him for Mansour,
who a while past with steps secure
trod these same stones, till the Kaliph’s ire
drave him forth to the Valley of Fire
(so little may a face endure
in the vague memory of the throng,
which loves some much but loves none long).
Thus monk and infidel they pass
(friend and friend were now more near),
and the slaves run on some steps before,

and wide on its hinges swings the gate.

“What ho ! what ho !” cries Zobeir,

“bring lemons quick and crystal glass
full of red wine ; for a friend once more
crosses my threshold, led by fate.”

Slaves come in swarms, and golden plates
bear the best of the City of Pomegranates :
but the saint finds strength to say them nay,
who, crouching, fawning at each hand,
offer the dainties of the land.

This Zobeir sees, and waves away
the slavish questioners, and inquires
what most his long-lost friend desires.

Deep in the cool green marble tank
soothed and swathed the saint's limbs sank,
and when he crossed again its rim,
though late almost on his path to heaven,
John knew that the world had need of him.

Then slaves bear in the softest wool
that ever from wild hill sheep was riven,
the finest linen of Sawad,
and over all a garment cool
chosen from the choicest Zobeir had.

These John is now obliged to don,
for soiled and torn is his robe, and none
so foul a garment would deign to wear
as a guest in the house of Zobeir.

Thus thought the saint as he made his way
through silken shades that hid the day
out to the open court, where stands
his noble host with outstretched hands.

And by St. George I think they were
of the soaring sort as noble a pair
as God has let live anywhere :

John with his glance all eagle and fire ;
gentle and calm, Al Zobeir,

the lord of war, for now the best
of all his nature owned was brought
to focus in the single thought
to greet his friend, to greet his guest.
Then sat they at the board together,
and the lesser guests let sit wherever
they willed below, and the slaves brought meat,
and both in the shade of the palms did eat.
Then flashed the eyes of John once more,
and he thanked the friend who had saved and
tended

the life which had that day well-nigh ended.
Then they talked their time of friendship o'er.
Meanwhile, to escape the heat of the sun,
those who passed by came one by one
and stood beneath the welcome shade
which the wide-spreading palm-trees made,
so that soon a numerous company
filled every place where shade might be.

"Mayhap," said the Vizier, "you can tell
us something of your new strange life,
since you left us all and went to dwell
beyond the reach of mortal strife?"

"Nay," said St. John, "my life has been
unworthy, vile, and very mean.

But how a Prince of India came
to leave his age and adore the name
of Christ, and like a bright pure flame
burned all his days, that he might be
as a beacon to humanity,
if you will, I shall disclose to you."

Al Zobeir bowed, and nearer drew
the swarthy, turbaned company.

PART II

THE LEGEND OF BARLAAM AND JOASAPH

ARGUMENT

TO Abenner, pagan king of an Indian land, is born an heir—the rejoicings—Count Hiram, the King's friend, becomes a Christian—he is captured, and gives his reasons for being a Christian—he is driven from the king's presence—Astrologers cast the horoscope of the King's new-born heir, Joasaph—his future greatness announced—but he will be a Christian—Abenner confines him in his palace—Joasaph, on reaching youth, becomes discontented—Abenner yields to his prayers, and permits him to ride forth—Joasaph sees for the first time in his life a diseased and an old man—Zardan, his guardian, speaks to him of Christianity—Monk Barlaam appears at Abenner's court disguised as a merchant—he obtains access to Joasaph and instructs him in the Christian faith—Joasaph becomes a Christian—Barlaam departs—Zardan confesses to Abenner that Joasaph has been converted to Christianity by Barlaam—Abenner consults Araches—the false trial decided upon—Nachor, the magician, personates Barlaam—Joasaph detects the fraud and forces Nachor to speak in favour of Christianity—Nachor does so, against the King's orders—the magicians

are unable to refute him—Nachor becomes a Christian—is instructed by Joasaph—Abenner becomes indifferent to his pagan gods—Theodas, the magician, is engaged by the priests to wean Joasaph from the Christian faith—the Prince is tempted by a captive Princess disguised as a handmaiden—the Prince resists her seductions—on her departure he dreams of Paradise, then of Hell—he falls ill of a fever—Theodas comes to heal him by magic—the Prince converts Theodas to Christianity—Abenner hands over to Joasaph a great province, to be ruled in the Christian manner—success and prosperity of the province beneath the rule of Joasaph—death of Abenner—Joasaph succeeds his father, but resigns the government—he retires to the desert, where he dwells in sanctity with Barlaam.

OUT of the mountains of the East,
as a bird flits from tree to tree
flew the tale of Barlaam monk to me
from lip to lip, from hand to hand,
telling how to the Indian land
came Barlaam to King Abenner,
to teach the Prince who grew the priest.
This King was fair to look upon ;
certès, the sun has never shone
upon a pair so very fair
as when with his queen of the blue-black hair
and the look of lovely things that are gone
he sat upon his jewelled throne.
One wish of all Abenner had,
one thing he felt would make him glad
more than all others : a male heir ;
(for over many years the queen,
fair and bare as the moon had been).
Therefore he ofttimes sought the cave
where dwelt the Evil Thing, to crave
an answer to his ardent prayer.
At length the Mystery spake : “ You may
await an heir upon the day
the queen shall dream that upon her
an elephant divine and white
come down from heaven shall alight.”
Soon after came such a dream to the queen
the curtains of her couch between.
Thereat the King did much rejoice,
and calling with a kingly voice,
he pardoned all the sinners who
in durance lay, as was their due.
And the wine flowed and victims fell
through the King’s realm, and all seemed well.
But distant thunder did foretell
the coming storm : thus it befell.

Count Hiram was a puissant lord
whose castles and whose counties lay
wide through the land, and the King alway
sware that with Hiram and his sword
the loss of all he could afford,
for that he'd win them back again
with such a liege to help ; but man
follows his heart and lets the brain
cry " danger, danger," all in vain.
For always underneath the ban
of the great King the Christian monk
did languish, and so far at least
Hiram had helped, and never beast
with equal joy did hunter hunt
as my Lord King and Hiram Count
those of the Faith (for both were sunk
deep in idolatry). Now came
strange whisperings and the lofty name
of Hiram, coupled with the creed
which most Abenner loathed : " He's fled,
and has left all, and lo ! the steed
he mounted flying has come again
full gallop o'er the sandy plain
back to its stable, riderless."
" 'Twere better for him to be dead,"
cried Abenner ; him I did place
beyond the reach of blame or praise,
to be my general in the wars,
in peace to frame with me my laws.
Depart and seek this rogue who dares
leave wealth and wife and all the cares
and all the joys of life to lie
with wild beasts naked under the sky."
He spake, and men at arms went forth,
the abject ministers of his wrath.
Far in the desert, 'neath a palm

Hiram they found transformed and calm.
And straightway to the King they led
this Christian man, and Abenner said :
“ Now tell me, Hiram, what you do
thus leaving all ? What secret harm
has any wrought you in my court,
that thus you flee away at night
and like a thief are haled to sight ? ”
Then answered Hiram, “ First from you
drive hence your foes, O King, I speak
when they are gone.” “ Where shall I seek
these enemies of mine you fear ? ”
said Abenner, and glanced at who stood near.
“ Anger and lust, O King, they stand
upon your right and your left hand ;
one fiery red as a furnace is ;
his words like water scalded hiss ;
purple the other, and he knows
that most his strength from power grows.”
Then said the King : “ Behold I drive
the twain away and in their place
stand justice and calm temperance.
Therefore, I pray you, that you strive
to tell me first by what fell chance
this plague of Christ made foul your face ;
then shall we counsel take and see
how best you may quite cleansed be,
and led back to reality.”
Said the Christian : “ If you, O King,
would know why every finite thing
I do abhor and find delight,
henceforth but in the infinite ;
When a little child I heard the truth,
which hid in childhood, choked in youth,
strove up in manhood toward the light ;
yet did I labour, yet did fight

daily against the powers of night,
until the Saviour's grace once granted
for ever the law of sin supplanted,
and as a veil from me were riven
the sins which hid my heart from Heaven.
And from that day the narrow way
I chose and follow, and detest
what you and yours still love the best ;
the joys of life and the returnings,
the loves of life and the vain yearnings
which torture, yet are but a dream,
which never are, but only seem,
yet wound with deadly dream-world claws,
yet slay by deadly dream-world laws.
I love alone the good and true
and loving them can not love you,
nor wealth nor honours nor the ties
which like a chain our families
weave round our lives. Him know not ye,
who made man with His mighty hands,
adorned with immortality,
and crowned him King of many lands ;
and more than all made Paradise,
where he should dwell in godly wise.
But man, alas, was led astray
by envy and the thousand sins
which set his path about like gins,
tempted along the rose-bowered way
which leads from Eden towards the sands
where pleasure rings her empty hands
and rose-crowns fade and sceptres lie
like bones stretched out beneath the sky.
Thus men fell far, and all the spheres
rang forth with well-deservèd jeers—
angels and demons laughed to see
what piteous thing a man may be.

Then Christ, who is the Son of God,
came down from Heaven and was made man,
suffered for us beneath the rod,
and at the last was crucified
that we might be as we began.
And Christ it is for us who died
whom you in pagan wrath deride,
and plunged in shameful pleasures lie,
a plague between the earth and sky,
worshipping 'Gods' which are the spawn
of your mad brain and die unborn.
Nay worse than this, for you have drawn
in your fell path the million slaves,
who bend the knee to your decree,
whose backs have felt your soldiers' staves ;
whose souls in peril stand by you ;
wherefore, I swear and loudly cry
that come the worst that you can do,
no part in this apostasy
from the Saviour Christ, man's Friend, have I.
Tear me with beasts or send the sword
to mow me down before the Lord,
I shall rejoice at breaking free
from things that change, and snare and flee.
The Scripture saith, that the whole world
in the cloak of evil is enfurled
and, 'love not the world nor what is there,'
for all is lust of the flesh or eyes,
or the pride of life which even dies
as you look on it, but he who dare
the will of God do and declare
liveth eternally, and I
have left the age and joined with those
whose mind like mine true wisdom knows,
who tread the path which points afar
where the eternal mansions are.

Those love I, those are brethren mine,
the rest I flee, and wait alone
in solitude the call divine.
Fearless of all, my soul at rest,
O King, I wait on your behest :
courage in suffering is shown,
my death may for my life atone.”
Then raged the King at heart full sore,
longing the holy man to tear
in pieces, as he dared him there,
and thought of torments many a score.
But pride spake first and his pledged word,
and “Ho,” he cried, “you knave and fool,
I know not in what vilest school
this dirge of blasphemous sound you learned.
But now, pardie, your flesh had burned
for your rash speech, save for my word
and for our ancient friendship’s sake,
sacred to me, which, though you break,
preserves you yet against my will
from the flames that burn and the beasts that kill.
Therefore, rise up, and get you hence
back to the desert, but if again
you e’er come hither, with intense
and subtle thinkings-out of pain
from your body I shall draw your soul,
as the flame rises from live coal.”
Then to the solitudes returned,
weary and sad, that man of God
who fain the martyr’s crown had earned
and the flaming path to heaven trod.
And the queen’s dream came true to her—
for a son she bore to Abenner,
who of all kings’ sons was the most fair.
Then made the King right royal cheer,
feasting his subjects far and near.

Then came the chief Astrologer
and many a lesser follower,
and the King spake and bade them read
the infant's life in starry screed.
And being prepared, they said : " Thy son,
O King, will reign ere his life be done
over a land to which thy sway
is as a single furrow lean
amid a million sprouting green
in the young fields, like all Cathay
to a mule's journey in a day."
" Where is this land ? " he asked of each ;
but none knew more or none dared teach,
till he, the wisest and the oldest,
nearest to death and eke the boldest,
who drawing near, in the King's ear
whispered, like Balaam in the tale :
" Thy son, O King, the stars have said,
will follow the sect that most you hate,
and nothing will his love abate
and never will his faith grow pale."
The King thought : " Now indeed I will
against the wild stars' course prevail ;
my son shall taste not human ill,
nor aught of the cursèd creed shall know
whence all things vile and evil flow."
Therefore, he bade his slaves to build
'mid spacious trees a palace fair,
guarded without, and inside filled
with all things loveliest and most rare.
And ministers he sent to lead
his son's first steps, and none might dare
speak of disease, old age, or death,
or poverty, and his court indeed
was comely and sage in the flower of age,
drawing a quiet, equal breath.

If any ailed, straightway his place
was taken by one as fair of face,
and the King's son told that round the throne
men bloomed or fell like flowers alone ;
and of the Christian creed no word
within those marble halls was heard.
Thus acted Abenner, the King,
and saw, but saw not anything,
and heard, but understood no word.
Meanwhile his son from childhood grew
toward youth and hardly aught he knew,
but in his face the virtues shone
and from his eyes an even mind
smiled forth his comely world upon :
yet he wanted, sought, and could not find
that knowledge which the foolish King,
shooting his arrows toward the skies,
bade still conceal from his son's eyes,
who ever craved for the unknown thing.
It happened that upon a day
he found himself at the tennis play,
alone with one whom above all
his ministers he loved the best,
and as back and forward sped the ball
he watched his time and hit it away
outside the walls and called with zest :
“ Heigh-ho, the ball has gone to see
what things in the world without may be ;
yet the King's son must ever stay
within his prison walls ; I pray
you, Zardan, tell me why just here
I must grow like a flower from year to year,
guarded by you from the unknown ? ”
“ Your father orders it, O Prince.”
“ I know, I know, but methinks I've shown,
these years we twain have together grown,

that not ungrateful, not unkind
is the Prince by some strange whim confined.
Tell me and friendship shall be yours,
sworn by a Prince whose word endures.”
Then Zardan told him of the truth,
his father’s love and his desire
that his son from childhood on to youth,
from youth to manhood should be free
from all the ills of humanity.
But not as yet did Zardan dare
tell Joasaph what these things were.
So the Prince thanked him and went forth
with lighter heart from the tennis court ;
and often now his father sought,
watching his face till the day when wrath
dwelt not therein. Then, “ Why am I,
dear Father, hid from the earth and the sky ?
always I mourn and dark unrest
forever rends my suffering breast ! ”
Then the King answered : “ Dear my son,
this loving you full well I have done
that all your life through there should be for you
nothing but joy without alloy,
pleasure of body, joy of soul.
Closed in your palace I’d have you drain
the cup of all pleasure and I would strain
from the golden juice the lees of pain.”
Joasaph answered : “ Alas, the whole
of my life is longing, and nought can cure
this pain that will evermore endure,
till like another man I may
fare forth and meet the world on its way.”
Then sick and sorry at heart the King
bethought him that all his love did bring
his son no pleasure, and he might die
shut up against his will from the sky.

Therefore he ordered slaves and horses,
chariots and men at arms to stand
ready to follow the free courses
which Joasaph should deign command.
But his father's dream he yet would follow,
though his son flit forth like a new-fledged swallow.
And, "Let none dare aught of evil shew
my son nor speak of any woe!
roses and smiles wherever he tread,
and let the maidens' lips be red,
and flutes and timbrels haunt the groves
wherein his princely fancy roves,
and at the opening of some glade
some pleasant comedy be played,
and let the utmost of your thought
to please and glad my son be brought.
For lo, I build a golden screen
Prince Joasaph and the world between."
Thus spake Abenner, and Joasaph now
might fare forth with a smoother brow.
Wherever he went on every hand
shone forth the brightest of the land.
And oft he mounted on his steed
and to his councillors gave no heed,
but sped along upon the wind,
musing with open, happy mind.
And ever as towards a village clearing
him as the folk saw quickly nearing,
smiles and flags did flaunt in the air
and joy was summoned everywhere.
But at the turning of a way
it happed upon a fateful day,
he saw one dragged, one pushed before,
and heard the closing of a door,
as though some precious thing were there.
Then riding up to the threshold ere

his followers knew what he would do,
he cried with a loud voice : “ Ho ! within ;
the King’s son waits, who would speak with you.’
Then the door creaked, and cracked and thin
answered a voice : “ We dare not open,
O Joasaph, for the King’s word spoken.
I am old and blind, and a leper lies
at my feet who is made of miseries.”
But “ Open, open,” cried the youth ;
then the hinges creaked and the door stood ajar :
and the fates shewed, cruel as they are.
He saw the blind man staring out
and the leper swathed in rags about.
Thus knew he the other half of the truth,
and the form of his countenance was wrought
to another shape by the strange new thought.
Then he harkened with a hard-drawn breath
as Zardan told of sorrow and death,
pressed him with questions : “ Can a man know
he will die when his age is so and so ?
Can he tell if sickness wait for him
or bright health ever play on the brim
of the cup of life ? And whither we pass
when life is ended, and why, alas,
is the world thus choked and sown with woe,
and who can deliver those who grow
older in all misfortune while
others the laughing years beguile
with lutes and songs and roses red,
lilies and maidens with drooped head ;
fragrant the maiden as the flower
and each made new for each new hour ? ”
Then Zardan answered as one would
who weaned a child from his childhood.
But for the woe and the end of all
and what hereafter may befall

us men who have lived on earth our day,
one sect there is which followeth Christ,
the Son of God, and the narrow way :
they are meek and poor and are baptized :
this holds the truth and the rest is lies.
But the King from out the utmost bourne
of his kingdom has driven the heads that are shorn,
the long brown robe and the girdle of rope.”
Then the Prince gazed in Zardan’s eyes,
and with the light of the star of hope
dancing in his did ask him more
of the Christian’s sect and the God they adore,
of the Mother of Christ, and how they came
the truth to guard like a sacred flame.
But Zardan had told him all he knew,
and daily the young Prince sadder grew,
cared not for dances, songs nor all
those joys that the budding youth enthrall,
drave off his courtiers, and would eat
dry bread alone, nor would he deign
ease the brown girls of their amorous pain,
treading their rose crowns under his feet.
Then, from the deep blue vault of the sky,
fell upon Joasaph that eye
which sleeps not and beholdeth all,
and fain would save and fain make known
that path which of all paths alone
from earth leads upward to His throne.
And in this wise did the thing befall.
In the solitudes of Sennaar
a monk there dwelt who was wiser far
than all his fellows : to him by night
came dreams from heaven which bade him seek
the land of India that he might
to the King’s own son reveal the light,
who in the toils of sin was weak.

Then Barlaam (for thus the monk was hight),
being by the word divine aware
of the aching heart of Joasaph,
returned to the age, and for his wear
gat he a merchant's robe and staff,
the gifts of God, and setting sail
to India came and sought out there
the town where Joasaph did dwell.
And when he knew it journeyed thither
and there he dwelt, a quiet liver,
and those who questioned him did tell
the tale of a wondrous gem to sell.
But this to no one would he show,
save, as he said, to some great prince who
the worth of the precious gem would know
and pay the merchant all his due.
Now this he did to prepare the road
which led to Joasaph's abode ;
and Zardan the faithful and the old,
of whom before in the tale was told,
heard of the merchant and his gem,
and seeking Barlaam said to him :
“ What, sir, is then this gem so rare
that you bring from far and will show to none ?
is there the like found anywhere,
or is your stone the only one ? ”
Then Barlaam answered in this wise :
To sell my sparkling merchandise,
I have climbed the waves and have dared the rage
waiting in tiger's yellow eyes.
My jewel is the only one
in all the world, and I will engage
unto the Prince the same to give,
for indeed it is a magic stone,
fit for great prince's hand alone.”
Then answered Zardan : “ As I live,

you shall come to the Prince and shall reveal
to him the virtues of the jewel ;
but tell me first and let me see
what virtues in the stone may be."

"The stone," said Barlaam, "will straightway
heal

all ills of the body and the mind,
make wise the foolish, make to hear
the deaf, and make the dumb to find
their speech, and more ; it will make kind
the hearts that hate ; and the hearts that fear
will happy grow ; all these in the stone
are virtues that I will make known
to your lord the Prince when toward him led."

Then answered Zardan, and he said :

"All honour light upon your head.

But first to me the jewel show,

and then together we will go

to the Prince's self." Then Barlaam sighed :

"Alas ! that your prayer should be denied.

For lo ! I have told you of the good
which the stone can work for sicklihood
of mind and body ; but in the eye,
if any evil humour lie,

and one look on it, then fares he ill,
for the darkness of night his world doth fill.

Or again, if any upon the gem
gaze, and his body be not as pure

as lilies abloom upon their stem,

then hardly may his life endure ;

for the jewel will parch and burn his blood,
as the sun the flats of the river mud.

And pardon me, sir, but methinks in your gaze,
though purer than some, is yet a haze
which floats between you and the upper sky."

"If that is indeed the truth, not I

will view the jewel ; but come with me
and straightway you the Prince shall see,
and to His Highness's self make known
the virtues of the precious stone,'
said Zardan. And soon the Prince they found,
lying upon a mat on the ground,
who idly within his fingers wound
the silk strings of a golden purse,
and at his side did a page rehearse
those tales which India's childhood nurse.
Then Zardan entered : " Peace to you,"
said the Prince, as the pair made reverence due.
He spake and raised him from his place.
Then Zardan : " May I beg your grace
to hear this foreign merchant tell
of his jewel with the magic spell."
Then the Prince, touched by the grace divine,
smiled, and without a word made sign
to Zardan and the page that they
should from his presence pass away.
" O peace be with you, mighty Prince ;"
" And peace with you, O man of God ;
it seems a thousand ages since
I knew you, and yet not before
my palace steps your feet have trod.
You have a jewel rich and rare ;
I know it, for I see it there
a-glittering in your eyes, which through me
pierce like a sword that would undo me.
Reveal to me your sacred lore
which all these years my thoughts adore
and fain would reach, where now it lies
hidden, yet shining, in your eyes."
" No merchant indeed, O Prince, I am,
and mine no mortal merchandise
to sell, but the Christian monk Barlaam.

But first I would make proof of you
before the truth you come unto.
A sower once went forth to sow
and as he went his seed did throw,
and some the birds caught up as it lay
upon the open hard highway,
and some fell in the rocky places,
some among thorns in desert spaces.
These all must perish, but some there fell
in the good soil and prospered well,
bringing forth fruit an hundredfold.
May you, O Prince, even so enfold
the truth in you as it is told
of the good soil." Then the Prince said,
"O Barlaam, when your name was spoken,
meseemed the silence then was broken
which weighed a century o'er my head ;
as no mere merchant stand you there,
but as an heavenly messenger."
Then answered Barlaam : " You do well,
O Prince, thus soon my end to tell,
and now I will discourse to you
of another Prince who also knew
that the robe and the wearer may be two.
He was a mighty king, and riding
in his golden chariot, past him striding
espied two beggars, clad in torn
garments and faces long outworn
with the cruel ravage of disease.
Then sprang the King down from his chariot,
and before those starvelings on his knees
their blessing and their pardon sought.
But the great men who were of his suite
held it by no means fair nor meet
that the dignity of the diadem
and the ample sweep of the Kingdom's hem

before two beggars' feet should lie.
But they, not daring to make plain
to the King what vexed them, straight did hie
to the Prince his brother, that he again
should tell the King ; and thus there came
to the monarch's ears the word of blame.
Now the custom in this land was so,
when the King willed a man should die,
that a trumpeter a blast should blow
before his door. As evening drew
her gray soft veils across the sky,
and the sorrows of the day seemed o'er,
before his brother's guarded door
sounded the trump : and thus he knew
that on the morrow he must die.
So with the night his vigil grew,
for never again would the sun's gold mane
spread glory for him in the East again,
nor the sweet company of the birds
for him give out their soul-sent words
as he sat in his summer paradise,
where the blue sky peeps and the wood-breeze
sighs.

Then with wild hair, and all forlorn,
called he for sombre garb, and at dawn,
girdled with sorrow, robed in woe,
he and his wife and children go
to the wide palace of the King,
where hardly yet does the gilding fling
gold to pay back the gold of the sun ;
and the guards are sleeping every one.
They stand in the court of the King's palace,
black their robes, and white is the face
of the wife, and the tiny children's grace
all fled away in the great fear
of the mystery which is so near.

But lo, from the golden gate comes forth
the King, the brother, no sign of wrath
marked on his kind imperial face,
where the hand of power and of time can trace
only the lines which deeper growing,
make clear within the bright soul glowing.
And, ' Brother mine, rise up,' he cried,
' rise up, my sister, do not dread
aught ill from me for our loved one's head.
How know ye not that the trumpet lied,
who have sat by me upon my throne,
counting the years flit by each one,
equal and loving, brother and friend?
Why thought you then that such love would end?
You who have done all good to me,
how came you not the fraud to see?
But since you such great fear did show,
how was it, brother, you did not know
when in the dust I lay before
those beggars, I who have sinned so sore
against God's wisdom and God's law,
that those were heralds sent from heaven,
before whose feet great kings must even
bow down like common men, and crave
His pardon who alone can save?
Therefore the trumpeter I sent
dear brother on your salvage bent
that his shrill blast should wake your soul
wandering in error from the goal.
As for my courtiers, I will make
a trial of them for your sake.'
Therewith he bade his workmen build
four caskets, two embossed in gold,
two smeared with pitch ; the first he filled
with dead men's bones, but the second hold
unguents and perfumes and rare gems

and cloth of silver, such as hems
the queen's robe, weary of the gold.
Then in turn he called each lord, and said
'Tell me, I pray : of the caskets which
are the more excellent, those of pitch
or the other sort?' Then each one made
like answer and 'The gold,' he said.
'Open the caskets,' bids the King :
and straightway from the golden cases
strikes a foul odour in their faces,
while from the pitch-smear'd scents take wing
as from wet roses in young spring.
The jewels wink and smile in the sun,
and the courtiers shamefaced every one
will bow and smile but wish the while
that they indeed were very far.
'Symbols of man these caskets are,'
declared the King, 'the first are dight
in power and glory and cloth of gold ;
open their hearts and you behold
such corpses as come here to sight.
But of the others which glitter there,
foul caskets teeming with jewels rare,
these are those vagabonds whom I
looking upon with the spirit's eye,
saw their fair souls their rags shine through,
and therefore knelt that I might do
them honour and but touch the hem
of the spirit's robes which covered them :
aye purple robes their spirits wore
and they were glorious o'er and o'er.'
Thus spoke that King, and in this wise
he taught them to distrust their eyes,
too apt to snatch at the things of sense,
but rather to use intelligence,
which like a torch-light leads the soul

step by step to its distant goal.”
Thus ended Barlaam : and “ Fair the flow,
sweet saint, of your discourse, but I would know ”
(said Joasaph) “ who is the God
that sent the sower forth to sow
and shines on all you say as the sun
on the traveller’s footsteps one by one
as the weary leagues for home are trod.”
“ If you would know who is my Lord,”
said Barlaam, “ He is Christ the unique
Son of God, He is the Word,
He is sole blessed, sole immortal,
in Him is refuge for the weak,
He dwells in light beyond the portal
with the Father and the Paraclete,
whom all to worship is most meet.
For One in three and three in One,
more blinding than the noonday sun
together does their Godhead run
and veils them from our purblind sight.
Three Persons in one perfect light,
knowing no end and no beginning,
eternal, changeless, uncreate,
bodiless, ignorant of sinning,
though knowing all ; who did create
all that we see and may not see
from nothing ; and first He made to be
the countless company of powers
invisible which haunt the air
and mock our vision everywhere.
And next He shaped this world of ours,
the earth, the sea, and the deep sky,
and adorned them with a joyful light—
even the shining from on high
of the sun by day and the moon by night.
He filled the earth with the beasts that play,

and the sea with the fishes that make their way
rhythmically, mysteriously
through the caves and palaces under the waves ;
He spake and all these were.

But afterwards He made Him man
with the earth's dust and breathed His soul
into the dust, so that there ran
the quickening impulse of the divine
through him and therewith full control
of his own will and power to think
and save himself upon the brink,
where fell the countless herd of swine.
Next, woman, of man's rib He made,
that she should be for him to aid.

And over all things man He set,
and made for him a paradise
where all things good and lovely met ;
Eden he called it, and it lies
in a far valley towards the East ;
and there God placed each kind of beast,
and in the woodland many a bird
flitted from bowing tree to tree
all innocent as man might be
now, had he harkened to the word
which was spoken to him by the Lord.

' For in the garden one tree is
and the fruit of it is the fruit of death,
therefore eat not of that,' God saith.

And Adam now indeed I wis
were innocent and living still
in that fair Garden free from ill,
save for the evil serpent's wooing
who talked with Eve for her undoing ;
one of the heavenly host was he,
mighty in mighty company,
and free of will like man created

his Maker from of old he hated.
Therefore from heaven God him hurled ;
he fell to rule the infernal world,
and fallen thus, he envied man,
and being wise conceived a plan
which should ruin Adam and ruin Eve
and drive them forth to toil and grieve.
Therefore a subtle snake disguised
from Hell to Eden Satan hied
and worked on Eve to taste the fruit,
and be wise as a goddess in high heaven.
And Adam yielding to her suit
also did eat, and both were driven
to wander, multiply, and die,
wringing vain hands beneath blind sky.
And the deeper plunged were men in evil
always the more rejoiced the devil,
who with his wealth of sin innate
man's soul did ever the more inflate.
And God when He sees that the wide world
in Satan's meshes is enfurled
pours forth His waters from the skies
and in the waves the whole earth lies.
But Noah with his family gat
an ark of wood, and they did float
till on the mount of Ararat
touched earth at last the world's own boat.
But of Noah evil men were born
who held that in blind chance alone
the hand of providence was shown,
jeering at God with lip of scorn :
others that in the stars of birth
is shadowed forth man's course on earth ;
and some adored the moon and the sun,
or the stars which their fixed courses run ;
some fire, some reptiles, and some brought

to the carved idol, paint-besmeared,
vile things, to vileness thus endeared
the homage of their vagrant thought.
And having made these images
endowed they them with all foul that is
in the heart of man ; for some, they said,
were thieves and beggars, some struck dead,
brother or father, some were slaves,
and all were criminals or knaves.
Alone throughout that impious age
did Abraham his mind engage
to find the hider of things hidden
beyond the range of human vision.
For when he saw sea, sky, and earth,
the sun, the moon, and every star,
each fixed and ordered from its birth,
he knew that by no accident
these things had happened as they are.
But God he recognised in all,
and knew that He can make to fall,
He only build again, and sent
by the angels' stair his prayer to heaven.
Then God said : ' Now, indeed, I am
well pleased with this man Abraham,
and he and his shall prosper even
a thousandfold, and they shall be
the race peculiar unto Me.'
Thus spake the Lord, and led them forth
from the land of Egypt, where the wrath
of Pharaoh schemed all manner of ill ;
but with full measure God did fill
the cup of Egypt's suffering—
plagued with all plagues, and when the sea
had stood aside and let there be
dry land for Israel's pilgriming,
and Pharaoh followed with his host,

then the waves met and all was lost.
Thus Moses and Aaron led the race
beloved of God for a long space
into the wilderness, and God wrought
strange miracles ; with heavenly bread
He fed them, and Moses from the Mount
tables of stone unblinded brought,
from which the coming ages count
the law of right, the law of wrong.
And after wanderings weary and long
the Lord His chosen people led
to the land so long since promised
to Abraham and his seed,
to the land with milk and honey flowing,
with greenwood trees and fair fruits growing,
to the promised land indeed.
But always in the mind of man
the devil's words of poison ran :
grim death usurped the throne of the world ;
and by their wilful error hurled
to hell, mankind must groan for aye.
When therefore in such pitiful way
God saw the people of His love,
His only Son He sent to them
of the Virgin born in Bethlehem ;
and as she went with child above
shivered the wings of the Holy Dove.
Born was the Saviour, and He knew
no gradual growth as children do,
but blossomed in a single night
to flood the world with heavenly light.
For thirty years thus Jesus taught,
and many to salvation brought,
and in the waters of the Jordan
He was baptized of St. John ;
and soaring down that white-plumed Dove

(the Holy Spirit from above)
lit upon Him, and a Voice did cry,
'This is My Son, well pleased am I.'
Thenceforward many signs and great
the Son of God on earth revealed,
for lepers white as snow He healed,
the blind He did illuminate,
drave forth the dæmon, healed the dumb,
made that the dead to life did come,
renewing everywhere the strain
of righteousness in man again,
and from vain joys and things diurnal
taught men to look for the life eternal.
And therefore chose He from the rest
Apostles twelve He loved the best,
that they should pass from land to land,
and signs and wonders for a brand
stamped true their words of prophecy,
preaching the Word which cannot die.
Then the Jews would slay Him, and suborned
Judas, whom Jesus had adorned
with His fair friendship, and had chosen
among the twelve. This man they cozen
with promise of a pitiful fee,
and the Lord Jesus he will yield
for the price of a gibbet in a field,
where Judas goes to hang himself.
Thus in the Gentile's hands doth He
suffer all evil patiently,
nailed to the arms of the cruel tree,
where in the *human* nature taken
to save the world, His frame was shaken,
but the *divine* did aye remain
free from all cognisance of pain.
And so it happed on the abhorred
Cross was crucified the Lord

Christ Jesus, and to Hell descended,
where crowds of suffering souls attended
His footsteps, and the Lord of the land
must yield to his overlord's command,
set free those souls of the just in Hell,
and lo, they fly in Heaven to dwell !
and the third day He rose again,
conqueror of death and sin and pain,
and when the forty days were ended
again to Heaven He ascended,
and sits at the right hand of the Lord,
whence He will come once more to earth
to judge the living and the dead,
and render to each man his worth.
And afterwards the Ghostly Word
on the Apostles lit and stirred
the spirit of all speech in them,
and on their heads the tongues of flame
wavered and waxed or waned as came
with God's own breath the inspirations ;
and they went forth to teach the nations.”
As Barlaam ended, swarm on swarm,
like bees for honey, or after storm
rapacious sea birds seeking food,
came the Prince's questions : “Are all men good
by nature ? Wherefore did the Lord
when all was in His power seek
to bind man to Him with a word ?
And the Lord Jesus, why so meek ?”
When all were answered and the mind
of the fair Prince some rest could find,
then Barlaam taught him of the virtue
in Baptism lies, and how 'tis due
each Christian be baptized, “for
even now perchance is Death at the door,
and he who unbaptized dies
plays fast and loose with Paradise.”

As rung this warning in his ears
burst forth the Prince with contrite tears,
clung to the monk and aye implored him.
Gently spake Barlaam and restored him,
and from the fountain in the court,
where then they stood, some drops he caught
in his hollow hand and made the sign
of the cross and spake the words divine.
“And though thy sins be as a million,
though they glare forth as doth vermilion,
they will be whitened like as snow ;
though coloured purple, white as wool.”
Then Barlaam made the Prince to know
how that the world with snares was full,
and told the tale of the man who fell
through fear of death into a well.
“He from an unicorn did flee
and heeded not the well till he
had fallen therein, but caught perchance
on his downward path at the little branch
of a tree that clung within a crevice ;
and deep below in the abyss
he gazing sees a dragon lying
him with red cruel eyes espying ;
and by the stone where his toes do rest
an aspic with a fourfold crest,
while the frail branch to which he clings
as over the abyss it swings,
two mice, one white and the other black,
behold ! with busy jaws attack.
But lo ! some drops of honey slipping
adown the bough he would be lipping
(for ah ! so sweet), and at once with scorn
drives from his thoughts the unicorn,
the mice, the aspic’s fourfold crest,
the waiting dragon and the rest,

and only thinks how he shall try
some drops of the honey to come by.
The unicorn, O Prince, is death,
the well is the world, where every breath
is drawn in peril, the two mice
are the night and the day which eat away
the branch of life, and the honey dripping
the joys of the world which man entice,
yet always from his lips are slipping.
The aspic with the fourfold crest
figures the elements at rest
within our body, which resolvèd
the human frame is quick dissolvèd.
The dragon, cruel and flamboyant,
is the vast belly of Hell aye waiting
for those who in lust's arms do pant,
careless of all but pleasure's sating."
Then said the Prince, "How veritable,
how artful is this pictured fable!
Cease not, I pray, such tropes to turn,
that I may diligently learn
the nature of our life on earth
and what to those who love it worth."
Answered the Ancient: "Earthly lovers
and such as the hood of lust aye covers
are as the man whose friends were three
but he loved them not in like degree,
For two he cherished and these he gave
gold and silver and all things brave
which he possessed, while the third alway
he passed off with a smile and a nay.
But the day came when he was brought
before the King in his judgment court
and ordered to find security
for a great sum: then speedily
he seeks the first, and the first can lend

but a single garment to his friend.
And the second said : ' I will come with you
part of the road towards the King,
further I cannot, for 'tis due
some business to an end I bring.'
Then at the last he sought that third,
and humbly with many a pleading word
craved pardon for his friendlessness,
pleaded for aid in his distress.
Then the friend said : ' I will go before
and with all my power the King implore.'
The first of the friends is wealth, the second
children and wife, but the third friend
on whom that sufferer scarce had reckoned
is Good Works faithful to the end.
For what will a man not do for gold ?
Hunger and thirst and heat and cold
and his very life in the scale he'll cast
so that much gold be his at the last.
And what the profit ?—a winding sheet ;
but that the worms will likewise eat.
And what of the second ?—children and wives
and kinsmen, for whom we risk the lives
of soul and body, but when we die
what profit have we ?—their company
to the sepulchre ; but see them hie
back to the world of things that be,
not less the dead one's memory hiding
than the tomb the place of his abiding.
But the third friend whom we requited
hardly with thanks, his friendship slighted.
He is the troop of our good deeds ;
hope, faith and charity and alms
and pity, and himself precedes
us to the Judgment Seat and calms
the wrath of God, and he disarms

our cruel enemies which wait
to accuse us at the dreadful gate
and claim the utmost of their due,
which he will pay for me, for you,
forgetting as true friend forgets
that from his store he pays our debts.”
Thereat said Joasaph : “ May the Lord
bless thee, O learned one, whose voice
maketh the soul in me rejoice,
and if it please thee, in a word
paint me the vanity of the world
and how a man may sojourn there
without he be in sin enfurled.”
Then Barlaam told of the king of the year.
“ In a certain city the custom was
to crown a stranger without fear ;
and when the ermine lay across
his shoulders and the diadem
gleamed on his brow, secure in them
each thought in turn : ‘ Now indeed am I
free of the land and shall ever reign
till the time come for me to die.’
Thus mused those fools in fancies vain :
for at the end of the year the power
and the wealth were taken, and each one sent
to a lone isle in banishment.
But once it chanced that the king of the hour
was wise in time, and sent before
clothing and food and a great store
of the choice faring of a king ;
so that when came the end of the year,
reavèd of all, yet with goodly cheer
he went to the island of banishment,
nor lacked he there for anything,
living in everlasting joy,
while those, his foolish predecessors,

who had not sent thither of their treasures,
cold, famine, and disease destroy.

Now the world is the city of the tale,
devils the burghers, men the kings,
born for the most part vain and frail,
whom the fiend's cunning oftentimes brings
to set no store on the time before,
but dwelling quite in things diurnal
they do forget the life eternal."

Then asked the Prince, "Since all you say
is true, and clearer than the day
the faith of Christ; why doth the King
my father seek the monks to slay
and the true faith to nothing bring?"

Then Barlaam answered in this wise:

"Truth oftentimes in example lies;
and I will tell you of a king
who ruled well in everything,
save that he lacked of faith; one night
his Vizier and the King did creep
forth in disguise, when most did sleep,
to roam the city; and soon caught sight
of a light in a hut, and drawing near
beheld two beggars rag-beclad,
dancing and singing with much cheer.

'How comes it that these fools are glad?'
queried the King, 'when you and I
with all our wealth and power have had
but joys which by their joy are sad.'

'What think you of their life, O King?'

answered the Vizier; 'May I die
if ever aught so filthy, vile

our kingly gaze hath dared defile,'

said the King; and the Vizier: 'Know, O King,
that just so vile, so mean a thing,
our life must seem to the Most High

as theirs whose rags and joy come nigh
troubling your regal mood. Alone
those treasures weigh which endure alway
—belief in God and in His Son.’”

This of the faith and this one more
told Barlaam of his copious store.

“A merchant once his son affianced
to a damsel glittering o’er and o’er
with wealth and beauty and allied
to all that merchants hold most high ;
but, for he loved her not, the son
took flight, and as he fled came nigh
to a woodman’s hut where a fair maid
worked with her hands, and working made
much thanks to God : and when he asks
why toiling ’mid ungrateful tasks
she praises God ; thus she replies :

‘For the chance of entering Paradise.’

Struck to the heart, the traveller now
would make her his with many a vow.

But her father saith him, ‘Nay, for you
are rich and splendid, and the due
of the poor is marriage with the poor.’

Then will the young man make him sure
of the fair maid, so throws in the air
turban begemmed, nor yet will spare
his broidered cloak, and dons such weed
as wears the woodman’s self indeed.

And in the house he craves to stay
working with them until the day
the father smiles and touched to see
such labour and such constancy
gives him his daughter and a treasure
worth all the gold in the world together.”

“Such treasure, Barlaam, finding you
I find,” said Joasaph, “but how grew

the faith, I know not, in my breast,
so late with fears and doubts oppressed.”
“By divers paths indeed doth God
lead those He loves to Him ; you trod
the path direct, the royal road,
yours is a special grace bestowed,”
said Barlaam, “and the little tale
of the churl, how he caught the nightingale,
will serve to show how faith may fail.
Once a churl snared a nightingale,
and as the brown bird throbbed in his hand :
‘Sir,’ said he, ‘if you let me free
three wisdoms you shall understand.’
He promised, and the bird began :
“‘The first is, try but what you can ;’
‘the second, “ne’er regret the past ;”
“believe no lies,” that is the last.’
Then the churl set free the bird,
and as she flew in the air she cried :
‘O fool that hast my wisdoms heard,
thysself great treasure hast denied.
For in my body a margaret
lieth which is indeed as great
as an ostrich egg ;’ thereat the man
believed the bird and sorrowed sore
because the same he had no more.
So he cried softly : ‘Come again
into my hand, dear little bird,
the better thy wisdoms to explain,
and thee with all humanity
will I entreat and set thee free,
when again thy wisdoms I have heard.’
Thereat the bird : ‘Now well I know :
thou are a fool, for that thou hast
my wisdoms three thus let go waste,
as this thy speech doth clearly shew.

For much thou longest for me now
high perched above thy head on the bough ;
and thinkest in my body small
to find an egg more large than all.’
Thus mocked the bird that churl indeed,
and those may mock of the Christian creed
at such as in the painted face
of some vain idol seek for grace.”
Then the Prince thanked Barlaam that he
adorned the faith thus cunningly
with stories like a brodered border
framing the picture’s comely order.
And Barlaam told of the peacocks true
and how the King the raven knew.
“ Heaps of rubies and emeralds
and the same set round with the amorous gold
which in each carved and supple fold
the coming of an Empress heralds ;
and sapphires smiling like the sea
when the sun shines, and that strange stone—
of jewels the chameleon,
daily and nightly changing hue
from blue to red, from red to blue ;
and the opal and the veiled moonstone
showed the King to the merchant, and: ‘ Fair
to see,
O King, are these,’ that merchant said.
Then the monarch to a garden led
his guest, and animals long dead
elsewhere in the world here browsed or fled
as they drew near, the unicorn,
the hypogriff, and the phoenix bird
which of the golden flames is born.
Said the merchant : ‘ Rare beyond all price
are the beasts and fowls, but hast thou heard
of the peacock with an hundred eyes

fixed in his tail?' – And the King said: 'Nay,
but my vizier shall go straightway
and bearing with him store of gold
seek out the land where such birds are sold.'
Thus spake the King, and the vizier
must seek the peacocks far and near.
But since he found them not; said he:
'Methinks no peacock fowl can there be
in all the world, but since the King
knows not the fowl, 'twere best I bring
a raven with an hundred eyes
painted upon him;' so he dyes
the raven and himself with lies
and brings the fowl the King unto
swearing it is the peacock true.
But soon again that merchant came
and as a present for the King
two real peacocks he doth bring.
Thereat the vizier, who knew not shame,
cried: 'Ha! these birds which the merchant brings
have falsehood written on their wings.
Come hither, all; come hither and see,
mine must the real peacock be.'
And the merchant answered him no word,
but called for water and on the bird
which the vizier brought did pour the same;
and black at once that raven came
all forlorn, of his glory shorn;
then the vizier poured water on
the peacocks true, but the brighter shone
their hundred eyes and pierced him through
the while he poured, as was his due.
And when these things the King did see,
honoured indeed must the merchant be
and driven for ever from his side
was the vizier who the raven dyed.

Now Jesus is the merchant bearing
peacocks of truth for the world's sharing,
the vizier an idolater ;

and the pagan creeds which everywhere
steal and lie and change and dye
are the black raven painted fair."

Joasaph looked at the saint and saw
his face deep furrowed o'er and o'er
and grey beard almost to the floor ;
therefore he asked, " Pray tell me, master,
how many winters' snows have passed ere
Christ like the dove from heaven alit
upon your mind and kindled it ? "

Then Barlaam answered, " Twelve."

" And for how many years did you dig and delve
the sands of the desert of ignorance
ere the great day of deliverance ? "

Then Barlaam answered, " Not a day ;
for all my living was only dying,
and all my prayers were but as lying,
till the hour came when the tongues of flame
flickered about my cell afar

hid in the desert of Sennaar,
licked the stains of the world away,
purged me throughly and burned the past,
so that my days from first to last
till those were as coal on the furnace cast.

Harken, O Prince, to the tale of one
whose life did split, as mine hath done.

A Prince was born upon the night
when a fiery star was trailing bright
its tail through heaven, and lo ! the same
brake off and in two parts it came.

Therefore the wise men of the land
foretold that the Prince's life in twain
would break and the halves quite separate stand

as things which cannot meet again.
And soon his father died, and he
ruled and lived most royally,
with wars and conquests, many wives ;
living in one short span the lives
of many men, nor marked in the least
the flight of time, but a great feast
each year upon his birthday gave
where all of beautiful and brave
in his wide kingdom ever came
and sung with crimson lips his fame
or struck their shields and cried his name.
It happened once as he reclined
on his royal couch and the table lined
with smiling ornaments beheld,
' All but my kingly face I see,
chief splendour of this company,'
he cried, ' bring mirrors : ' so they held
a silver mirror him before.
Then seamed with furrows o'er and o'er
his face and the wild locks of youth
drooping or grey, or fled forsooth
he saw, nor revelled any more,
turning from lies to seek the truth.
And ah ! what guerdon, Prince, for you
sunk in the depths of the life of the sense,
when now the barriers are broke through,
when now for you outshines the intense
life of the livers in the truth.
Such as that King's, so was my youth
rioted, wasted, revelled away,
in pleasures frail as the flowers that sway.
What is the joy of it worth in sooth
by the deep inmost uttermost joy
which fills my soul without alloy,
and now in you is rising, rising,

and on this day of your baptizing
breaks forth with splendours as the sun
shining from heaven when night is done ? ”
Then said the Prince, “ With what you tell,
O saint, I feel my soul doth swell
to burst its prison ; and since you came
to save me from a life of shame,
take me with you, that dwelling free
in the desert with the Lord and thee,
in that most admirable life
I may save the years of youth and of strife.”
Then answered Barlaam : “ Such request
with a parable is answered best.
A rich man once a young gazelle
kept for his pleasure, and all day
the fair slim creature wonted play
about the lawns and the woods as well,
coming at call, and licked the hand
which gave it bread, and pawed the sand.
Till suddenly strange longing grew
in its breast for freedom, and it knew
no peace, till cantering down the glade
its fellows of the forest, made
to share their furry company.
So all the day long with the brown throng
of the wild gazelle the tame would be,
ever returning as night fell
to sleep secure where its lord did dwell.
But soon the lord said : ‘ Where then is fled
the slim gazelle that I love so well ? ’
And his servants told him, and when he knew
he sent his huntsmen, and they slew
full many of the wild gazelle,
and the tame led back that it should dwell
chained in the courtyard of that lord.
Thus would it be if you followed me,

O Prince, to the desert, since the sword
your father wields would sever us,
would slay my fellows and ensure
for him damnation swift and sure.
But you and I are now placed thus
that both are safe upon the shore,
nor plunge to seek for danger more.
Thus a swimmer once and his dear friend
sought on a summer day the river
which flowing gently past did ever
smile as to say : ' Ay, come and spend
some minutes in my emerald shallows,
come where the grass waves by the bank,
come to the shade of the bowing shallows.'
They plunged ; one swam, but the other sank,
for though the water seemed not deep,
yet 'neath the weeds green fathoms keep
the secret of its treachery
hid by that wavering canopy.
In vain the friend the current clove,
caught at the weeds and wildly strove.
Thereat the swimmer drew him near
and his heart felt a double fear,
first for his friend lest he should drown,
next for himself that if he came
within his frantic reach the same
would drag them both for ever down.
Therefore he touched him not, but cried :
' Swim steadily, swim by my side,
fear not, but strike out as I say.'
Thus did the friend, and in that way
both came to shore ; as you and I
will win the shore if you follow me,
but cling not close, lest now you bring
both to the death."
Thus having spoken and explored

the regions of the faith of the Lord,
Barlaam withdrew to the hostelry ;
and Zardan coming hastily
asks of the Prince if true it be
that the merchant is a monk's disguise,
the previous stone his merchandise
the faith of the Christians ? And the Prince
answers him : " Ay, and if you will
you shall hear this babbler talk his fill.
Retire behind the golden curtain
when next he comes and thus convince
yourself of all : but be you certain
that as the murmur of sea-shells
sounds in my ear the tale he tells."
So Zardan, as the Prince had bid,
behind the golden curtain hid
on the morrow when the hermit came.
And Joasaph said : " I pray thee, Father,
that in one handful I may gather
those blossoms which have Faith for name."
Then Barlaam told how we must love
God only all things far above
with all our heart and soul and mind
and keep His law with love and fear,
who made the visible earthly sphere,
and the world invisible far and near.
And thus and thus did Barlaam bind
the various flowers of the faith ;
then sought again his hostelry.
Alone with Zardan, Joasaph saith :
" Full vainly spake he of the faith
which maketh again and gainsayeth."
Thereat said Zardan, " Wherefore try
the truth of your servant, your ally ?
Full well I knew that in you grew
the words of the prophet, and indeed

fain would I follow where you lead
but weak my feet as my faith ; and the King
drop by drop my blood will wring
from my writhing body, who brought the stranger
into your Highness's own chamber."

Then Joasaph answered : " No reward
equals the knowledge of the Lord ;
therefore it was I hid you here,
and from your speech, alas, 'tis clear
you are weak indeed. But for the King ;
I pray you say not anything
of Barlaam nor the faith, till reason
shall find for me a fitting season
all to explain." (But with the sot
like seed on water prosper not
the words of wisdom.) On the morrow,
came with the sunrise, full of sorrow,
Barlaam to say farewell. Again
the Prince embraced him, and in vain
he prayed the saint to take of gold
at least so much as his hand would hold.
But Barlaam would not ; " For," said he,
" such things do not exist for me
save by the order of God ; I go
back to the desert where we know
not gold from silver save by the glow
of the sand in the sun or the clouds on high,
sailing serene in silver by."

But seeing the Prince was very sad
he did him off the robe he wore
and the Prince his, and each stood clad
in the robe of the other. " More, far more,
than cloth of silver or cloth of gold
this robe to me," said Joasaph ;
" for in every seam, in every fold
of you a memory it hath,

like the leaves of a book which in its creases
speak of the giver and ever pleases
the heavy heart of of the absent one."

Then Barlaam raised his hand and prayed
to God the Father and the Son
and the Holy Ghost that they should aid
the young vine planted, and accord
that fruit of justice it afford ;
comforting it and setting free
from the devil's wiles and, " May it be,
O Lord, inheritor, even with me
of everlasting joys that art
through all the ages throned apart."

Having thus his orison completed
and Joasaph for the last time greeted,
he left the palace thanking God
that not in vain his feet had trod
the devious paths of a strange land.
Now Zardan, weak and led away
by the thought of the King, could not withstand
his conscience crying night and day—

" Thou hast been faithless to thy trust."

Then sickening as all mortals must
when a secret sorrow rends and tears,
Zardan resigned his charge and the cares
of the watch of the Prince. When Abenner knew
that Zardan ailed, he came to view
his servant ailing and to know
the cause wherefrom his ailment grew.
Then Zardan's heart did overflow,
and " Sire," he cried, " red death alone
can for my fearsome fault atone.

A merchant with a precious stone
I brought to the Prince, but brought a lie,
monk Barlaam, Christian, and the Prince
his artful speeches did convince

of the Christian faith ; now let me die,
who am worthless, traitor to my King.”
Abenner frowned and his mind did wring
to find the issue of this thing.
At last for Araches he sent,
and asked him as his friend how best
he should purge his son of the Christian pest.
Araches smiled and wheeling went
his mind as a falcon beats around
the quarry’s bushy hiding-place.
At last he spake : “ Now from thy face,
great King, drive sorrow, for I have found
two ways, whereof if one should fail,
for sure the other will prevail.
Therefore send soldiers who shall seek
monk Barlaam, and if he be caught
full soon the Prince shall see how weak
is the Christian faith ; for with good cheer,
or else with torments, or with fear,
this monk to recreance shall be brought.
But if perchance he should escape
our vigilance, just such a shape
hath the mage Nachor, who is wise
in all the Christian lore of lies.
He shall be Barlaam, him refute
your priests and sages in dispute,
and thus the wandering mind of the Prince
his Barlaam’s failure shall convince
that out of gossamer he tries
to weave a ladder to the skies.”
Soon said, soon done, but all in vain
Barlaam they sought o’er hill and plain.
Therefore went Araches by night
towards Nachor where alone he dwelt,
and as a monk was he to sight,
but gave in the place of blessing blight.

In few words Araches made clear
his part to him, and Nachor felt
that the task induced was very light,
for learned was he in Christian lore
and nothing placed in the world before
his vantage : " And the gold shall pelt
on you in torrents, and the King
grant all you ask, if you do this thing,"
said Araches. So as agreed,
Nachor was bound and in the prison
thrown as a Christian with derision.
And the King announced to all around
that Barlaam the prophet being found,
all Christians far and near indeed
might fearless come and of the faith
discourse, and to his son he saith :
" Joasaph, now within my keep
is Barlaam in a dungeon deep ;
and me as father and as King
you must obey in everything ;
yet will I hear what Barlaam saith
of the mystery of the Christian faith."
Said the Prince : " May the will of the Lord be done,
in Him my soul I do confide,
with me His pity shall abide."
Then heralds went, and every one
summoned of Christian, pagan, Jew,
to the great contest, and but few
of the latter, and of Christians one,
Barachias only, dared appear.
A monk he was, who knew not fear,
and by false Nachor stood like day
which drives the mists of night away.
And of the pagan's empty creed,
great was the multitude indeed ;
augurs, magicians and diviners,

and sophists who are lie refiners,
pontiffs of vain idolatry,
mages of India and Chaldee.

Then from his lofty throne uprising
spake Abenner, their throng despising :

“ One Barlaam monk will now dispute
the Christian faith. You will confute
him and his deities utterly ;

or *his* the victory and you die
disgracefully, and all you own
on the winds of heaven shall be sown.”

Thus spake the King, and Joasaph
said, “ Sire, your speech much wisdom hath,
let it be even as you say.”

Then turning him where Nachor stood :

“ Barlaam,” he said (for still he feigned
that he in ignorance remained,
though clear the fraud to him as day),

“ From the gods my country holds most good,
you by your honeyed words have turned me
to follow the Christian creed and earned me
my Father’s wrath and great distress,
who once did live in happiness.

Now hangs your life in the wavering scale ;
which side it leaneth lies with you,
who are alike the weighed and the weigher.

Either you prove Christ’s doctrine true
before each pagan vain gainsayer,
and I in the faith will never fail
and all my life through Christ adore
even as you taught me once before ;
or you are conquered—truth or fraud
it matters not—for with these hands
your heart I’ll tear and your false tongue
forth from your body and afford
at least a meal to the dog that stands

in the plain below." Thus Nachor, flung
into the net for another wove,
pondered awhile and pondering chose
to cleave to the Prince, for well he knew,
that the threats as the deeds of the Prince were true

When all was ready, one stood forth
of the pagan crowd and cried : " Are you
Barlaam, the Christian hermit, who
has spoken lies and dared the wrath
of the King Abenner, lord of Ind,
teaching his son that man has sinned,
and through Christ Jesus crucified
alone he can be purified ?

Methinks that the gods of the cloudy mountain,
the gods of the field and the gods of the fountain,
are better than Christ Jesus tied
to a vile cross, pierced with a sword in the side.
As though a God who cannot save
himself, to others gave
the strength to vanquish and be strong,
the joy of life and dance and song."

Then, like the ass of Balaam, broke
Nachor the silence and thus spoke :

" Sire, by the providence of God
this sphere of earth my feet have trod,
and I have looked into the skies,
and strained my poor and mortal eyes
unto the heavenly mysteries,
and thus I knew that God alone
moved all, for the moved is ever less
than is the mover ; therefore I
rejecting vain idolatry
declare the God who oft has shown
libation and live sacrifice,
to be detestable in His eyes ;

no part He hath in visible things,
but in Him all have their beginnings.”
Thus much of the true faith he spake
and the three pagan creeds he brake
into Chaldæan, Greek, Egyptian ;
“ for each of these is the great captain
of many lesser which do fashion
upon those models human passion.
Now the elements to the Chaldee
are gods, and in their honour he
carves statues from the plastic stone,
which statues by the ages mown
lie shattered in the sand : ‘ the sky
is God,’ forsooth, these pagans cry ;
though the stars move from sign to sign,
and the sky is by the work divine
of the one great artificer.

The earth a goddess ! when on her
the vilest of creation stamp,
she whom the yellow fire consumeth,
who rots corrupted by the damp,
she who the blood of all the slain
must in her fœtid sides contain,
she whom the moody sexton doometh
with his vile pick to embrace the bones
of lepers perished, she who owns
no better claim to Godhead than
does water soiled by beast and man.
Fire too they claim for God, and bear
her here and there and everywhere,
make her at will or great or small,
and roast their venison withal !
The Sun they worship, who must rise,
and setting every night he dies,
who is far smaller than the sky,
and like the stars by law divine

must move in turn from sign to sign.
The Moon a Goddess ! who must lie
under eclipse and wax and wane
and come to the same place again
by heavenly law, no Goddess she—
pale handmaiden of the powers that be.
And man they worship ; man whose mood
changes from hour to hour, now good
now bad, now coward now courageous,
now buoyed up with a pride outrageous—
then hurled to earth, in vain repents—
man formed of varying elements,
wearer of raiment, piteous man,
whose utmost life is scarce a span.
Now, an your Highness will, I speak
after the Chaldee, of the Greek.
More madly foolish they than those,
as greater sin from greatness grows.
They find their deities everywhere,
in woods and streams and faces fair,
in storms and seas and shameful faces,
that all which in themselves debases
may find ensample and escape
in the high gods, who sin the same,
and mortals sinning dare not blame—
murder, adultery, and rape,
and crimes too evil for a name.
Saturn their elder god is he
who lay with Rhea and did devour
his children till the fateful hour
came Jupiter and gelding him
did cast his members on the sea
(whereof rose Venus fair and slim) ;
and Saturn bound to Hades hurled—
his Father ! with the early world.
A god in chains ! what sorry fable,

which to believe what man were able ?
Jupiter king of the Gods they claim,
and shapes of beast and shapes half human
and shapes of animals without shame
he took to enjoy mere mortal woman.
He bare Europa as a bull
upon his back, and the tower full
of gold betrayed his Danae,
Leda the swan, Antiope
the satyr, lightning Semele,
and many children by all these
and others had he—Hercules,
Bacchus, Apollo, Amphion,
Perseus, Sarpedon, every one
a bastard, and daughters full a score,
Diana, Helen, and those nine
men call the Muses, and indeed
make mention too of Ganymede !
The fair youth pourer of the wine,
pourer of wine and somewhat more.
Vulcan the blacksmith they create
a god who holds within his hands
nails and a hammer, God and poor !
like mortal man the slave of fate,
else wherefore such a trade endure ?
and lame withal, and loving Venus,
who such a lover scarce withstands !
Then Mercury, a subtle thief,
and an enchanter ; Esculapius
the leech, the bruiser of the leaf,
mixer of potions, slain with thunder
by Jove who loved the Spartan ; wonder
indeed where all his healing lay !
And Mars the god who stole away
the sheep, and fell to loving Venus ;
'Come,' says Cupido, 'and between us,

Vulcan, we'll bind the amorous god.'
Sheep-stealer, warrior, lover chained,
what paths has not your godhead trod ?
And yet such monster is not disdained
by the mad Greeks, and to Bacchus even
do they accord a place in heaven—
madman, adulterer, fugitive, slave,
drunkard, soon hunted to the grave
by the Titans. And one drunkard more
I yet must add to the long score
—Hercules, murderer of his children,
who burned himself—and God Apollo,
a minstrel bearing case and bow.
Hark, to his harping, even when
the people pass, with wreathèd smile,
behold this gipsy god beguile
the simple folk, a god foretelling
the future in their cross-lined palms !
A penniless god reduced to selling
his very deity for alms.
Ay, let him harp and ne'er so sweetly,
in hell his friends shall burn full meetly !
Diana chasing in the wood
the deer and boar ! ha ! ha ! 'twere good
to find divinity in her,
and yet those fools her worship share
among the rest. See Venus rise
wanton from ocean, in her eyes,
blue, blue and moist with the sea's brine
is lust enough to turn to swine
all Circe spared, for paramour
now Mars now Vulcan, gentle or boor,
it matters not, so oft she change.
Her loves among the mortals range ;
now mad for dark Anchises she
makes toil for him the very sea,

now fair Adonis whom the boar
slew, and his mistress doth adore
to madness, seeking hill and vale
in vain, and now must crave of pale
Persephone, and storms and cries
for the lost violet of his eyes.

Ay, weeping wanton, ay, Adonis,
in hell indeed your double throne is.
Ay, dwell thou there, immortal killed
Ay, follow him, thou goddess filled
with all iniquity. Thus, Sire,
are the Greeks sunk in evil dire,
mimicking those who make of hell
a place where even gods may dwell
But now the Egyptian cult behold,
more mad than these a thousand fold ;
for while Chaldea adores the star
rising at even, and the Greek
at least in human form doth seek
his God, the vile Egyptians are
sunk to the worship of the brute,
the plant, the tree, and are defiled
with evil upon evil piled :

—a pyramid which hath its root
in the mire of life : first they adored
Isis, whose brother and whose lord
Osiris was, whom Typhon slew,
—brother his brother—and Isis knew
no peace and with her infant son
Horus to Biblis fled and sought
Osiris in her grief distraught ;
till Horus, come to man's estate,
slew Typhon. Thus these gods each one
are weaklings and must bow to fate ;
—Isis is helpless to regain
husband and brother, Typhon slain

must pass to the underworld. In pain
and infelicity and death
these gods must draw their mortal breath ;
yet these the Egyptians do adore,
these and as many strange gods more
as they may hear of and god-brutes
their vain idolatry salutes—
sheep, goat, calf, pig, ram, crocodile,
vulture, hawk, eagle, aspic, dragon,
wolf, monkey, cat, and all things vile ;
these worship they, these call upon
for aid in war, these though they rot,
are slain and eaten, know they not
for false ; and ah ! it marvels me
that Greek, Egyptian, and Chaldee,
seeing his gods forged, beaten, hewn,
consumed with time, their numbers strewn
to the four winds, can yet believe.
And an ill turn have their poets done,
thinking to praise them as they weave
their fables, for if God be one
then in His parts is unity.
But if the gods the gods pursue,
ravish and murder ; then 'tis true
from wills divided, wills malign,
such motions spring, and none can be
held god of all their company.
Last, of the Jews of Abraham's line
dwelling in Egypt ; these the Lord
succoured and saved by Aaron and Moses ;
but vile, they slay with reckless sword
the prophets, and all their pleasure is
in following the Gentile's gods,
and when Christ Jesus walked on earth,
of the Virgin born in stainless birth,
outraged and bound and scourged with rods,

they delivered Him to Pontius Pilate,
the Roman governor, their hate
grown stronger with each benefit
which on their thankless heads had lit.
And now one God omnipotent
they do adore, but not as meant
by the holy writings, for they are
from the true faith strayed almost as far
as are the Gentiles. But Christ Jesus,
Son of great God sent down for us,
born of the Virgin without fleck
by the Holy Spirit, for our sake
made flesh, to Him we bow the neck,
we Christians, who came to take
our sins on Him, and crucified
in mortal flesh, on the Cross He died ;
and rose on the third day again,
conqueror of hell and death and pain,
with His held converse forty days,
then rose before their eyes to Heaven.
In Him believe we, Him we praise,
and with the Trinity engraven
within our hearts, to Him we look,
and if you study but the Book,
you will come to the knowledge of God, His Son,
and the Holy Spirit, Three in One ”
Thus ended Nachor, but from all
the pagans present, slight and small,
came the answer to his argument,
like sea-birds railing at the sea.
Then raged Abenner mightily
against the sages ; some he smote
in the face, the robes of others rent,
and some he drave forth to be scourged ;
in the eyes of others slaves rubbed soot,
and still the King his fury urged,

but yet spared Nachor, having sworn
the Christians safe, and dreaming still
that, left with Joasaph, he will
yet wean him from the faith new-born.
But Nachor now, with Joasaph,
came to the palace, and was safe
from the pagan crowd that followed them
with curses smothered at the hem
of the Prince's robe : then said the Prince :
“ Nachor, I marvelled ever since
your speech began, for well I knew
your face, and wondered what strange lies
your evil wisdom might devise.
Ah, well I saw your misery through
the golden garb which covered you ;
yet were your words as words of fire,
such as the tongues of flame inspire.
And now I give you for reward
the mightiest gift I can afford.”
Then Joasaph declared the faith,
and Nachor harkened (for his defence
armed with celestial eloquence,
had been as the prayer that a child saith
after its nurse), and, “ I hear ! I hear !
Now see I with the blinded eye
of the heart which the Ancient Enemy
pierced in his malice ; but ah ! I fear
too old am I in every sin
the gates of Heaven to enter in,”
wept Nachor ; but Joasaph, “ God at need
can of these stones raise Abraham's seed.
And come they at tierce, sext, noon, or vespers,
or come they at dawn with the sparrow's whispers,
so they have worked in the Father's vineyard,
each labourer hath the like reward.”
Thus he raised up Nachor, and comforted him,

and with broken voice and with eyes yet dim
thus spake that ancient penitent :

“ Most noble Prince, from Heaven sent
to be my Saviour, now the jewel
I hold in my hand, and life as fuel
of sacrifice and penitence

I would offer to the only God.

So an it please you, hastening hence,
I will seek the desert wastes untrod,
striving with sorrow, penitence, pain,
some meed of virtue to attain,
while yet life lasts.” Then Joasaph
thanked God, whose infinite pity hath
a thousand ways to touch and heal,
embraced the veteran, who did steal
forth from the town, by all unseen,
till in the desert a monk he found
who dwelt in a cave beneath the ground.

Him as of old the Magdalene
fell Nachor the sandalled feet before,
and weeping many a bitter tear,
for holy baptism he did crave.

This with due preparation gave
the holy man, and in the cave
dwelt with him Nachor many a year,
worshipping God in love and fear ;
then went he happy to the grave.

Meanwhile, in sorry plight they were,
mages and sages, for Abenner
grew daily in the cult more cold,
nor sacrificed he as of old,
and many a goat and sheep and ox,
lord of the herd, pearl of the flocks,
did low his last or bleated fast,
while the white-robed theories passed,
all destitute of majesty ;

and the King not even deigned to cast a glance towards those gods whose glory was now for him but a children's story, heard half his life by some strange fate, then changed at the last for something great, beyond his habits and his heart.

For Abenner's life in chiefest part merged in the dizzying joys of sense, which of all joys are most intense ; drunk not with wine, but with desire, "held by the thorn," as saith Isaiah. Hence the King wavered as drew near the greatest festival of the year, and the priests of the pagans were in fear lest he might let the season pass nor make an offering, and thus be lost the cult for ever. Now there was one man in the kingdom, Theodas, could work on the mind of the King, for most Abenner loved him, called him friend, and further showered without an end honours upon him, but Theodas dwelt apart in a lone cavern, where many devils and souls that burn waited his orders ; for he was a great magician, and the Cross his enemy. So when they came and besought him with each winning name that he would deign to wean the King from the God of the Christians, the thing seemed to him pleasant ; wherefore tracing marks in the sand, and therein pacing, called he on Ashtaroth, Astarte, and his other gods that they should be with him to aid, and all the legion flocked round of lesser fiends, that the air

was thick and black as is despair,
when the city gates before them shone
Then at a sign these evil things
did hide themselves with airy wings,
while with a palm branch in his hand,
wearing a goatskin, Theodas
came to the place where the King was.
Smiling, he bowed, and, "Sire, I come
to wish you joy for the Christian band
by your philosophers made dumb ;
and if it please you now would pray
that youths and maidens passing fair,
and sheep and oxen and incense rare,
we offer to the gods to-day,
since by their aid the deadly lie
of Jesus Christ to-day will die."
Then Abenner : " Alas, dear friend, not so ;
the Christian triumphed. But let blood flow
till a crimson veil the altar covers.
Perchance the gods did hunt or travel,
or quaffing deep ambrosial mead,
they did forget Abenner's need,
and thus my fool philosophers
the Christian's lies could not unravel."
Then the King made sign, and victims' groans
again made weep the granite stones.
Then said Abenner, " Theodas,
you are my friend, you are more wise
than the cat of Egypt in whose eyes
all of the past and future lies.
Prince Joasaph to plague me has
declared him for the creed of death,
taught him by Barlaam, monk, whose breath
makes freeze the very blood in my bones,
then surge again in waves of fire.
Now an your wit can find a way

to bring him back to the light of day,
as once the queen of all desire
her boy from Hades, turkis stones
and margarets shall adorn the base,
and a heaven of sapphires fill the space
of the flowing robe of the statue raised
in gold to Theodas, whose face
shall ever smile on the King's palace,
and ever bear this legend traced :

‘ Here lieth Theodas, who led
Prince Joasaph back from the dead.’ ”

Then Theodas, having taken counsel
with the abysmal things of evil
which waited on him in the air,
his thought did place before the King,
but subtly he draped the devilish thing
in robes of fable, seeming fair.

“ Once to a King in his old age
a son was born to be his heir,
and the King's own Astrologer
with globe and circle did engage
to cast the Prince's horoscope.

When this was done : ‘ There is no hope,’
said the astrologer, ‘ that your son,
my liege, will ever see the sun,
save in a dark secluded chamber

where never a ray of light shall enter ;
for lustres twain he shall remain,
till the Bull ride free of the Crab again
(so fickle in their vagaries are

the body's humours, and the star
which reigns at birth).’ So was it done,

and when the invisible years had run,
said the King : ‘ 'Tis time that the Prince wide-eyed
the joys of the beautiful world espied.’

Therefore they gathered jewels and arms,

chariots and horses, that enchant
the eyes of youth, all save the greatest—
fair women with their thousand charms.
And the Prince on his white elephant
passed down the flowered streets of the town,
and of each sight preferred the latest ;
till by him went some fair women.

‘ What are those things that are not men ? ’
queried the Prince ; ‘ Why, dæmons they
born and bred to lead men astray,’
answered the guides, as back they led
the Prince to the palace ; and the King said :
‘ Of all those beautiful things, which one
do you the most desire, my son ? ’
Then said the Prince, ‘ Pardie, I find
the dæmons most are to my mind.’ ”

“ Full oft before this day, I trow,
for the Prince was broken the virgin’s vow,”
quoth Theodas, “ but find a girl
who shall be fair as a pure pearl,
and tempt him with her night and day,
and let no man come near to him,
but ever in the stilled and dim
and scented corridors let play
the maiden’s robes, and they shall draw
the Prince back to the world once more.”
Thus counselled Theodas, and the King
bethought him that the dice of war
had thrown a royal maid to him
whom he might use as a plaything.
A maid she was both fair and slim,
white as a lily, and her eyes,
nor large, nor small, shone in such wise
as none dared long to look on them.
Her smooth face filled her oval mirror
as a picture framed, the lips of her

were red and thin like rose on stem,
red and white petalled when she smiled ;
trim curls in sparse arrangement clomb
the golden barrier of the comb
which held them prisoners in rows ;
her ears had echo's self beguiled
to tiny secrets, and her nose
dwelt like that flower amid the snows,
which clings upon the precipice,
yet being perfect is as fair
as snowflakes in the rare clear air.
Her mind was all that evil is.
Such was this princess, and she came
upon the mission of her shame,
humbly clad as a handmaiden,
bearing upon a golden plate
grapes and a cloven pomegranate,
and kneeling before the Prince she said :
“ My Lord, who art the flower of men,
ah ! pity me, a captive led,
a princess royal in distress.
Ah ! sad my fate, and often I
have all but had the strength to die,
who am weary of living as a slave.
Methinks that the Christian God should save
my soul an he cared, but who can care
for a slave princess, though ne'er so fair ?”
Thereat she gathers in her eyes
a tear or twain, and Joasaph cries ;
“ Woman, believe in God, be bride
of Jesus Christ who was crucified
to save the world ” ; and told of Eve,
whom once the serpent did deceive,
how from the garden she must fly
and once immortal yet must die
by her own sin ; but now no heed

gave the maiden to the Prince, for she
with the spirit of evil secretly
communed, and then she spake indeed
as with his tongue : " O sweet my lord,
if you would save my soul, accord
the boon she craves to your handmaiden.
Let this couch be our marriage bed."
Then Joasaph : " Woman, all in vain
is your request, though I would fain
rescue your soul, but unpolluted
I have sworn since baptism to remain."
Then she with thin lips downward curving,
her flower-poised head on her shoulders swerving,
" Ah ! Prince, what I ask is not all evil ;
for Christian books I have read and heard :
' stainless is marriage and honourable.'
And ' those whom marriage hath joined together,
let them remain so joined for ever.'
And have the ancient prophets erred ?
is the Scripture written to beguile ?
when Peter, prince of the Church, took wife ?
and with her dwelt he all his life ;
therefore doth marriage not defile."
" Woman, you speak the truth," he said,
" honourable is the marriage bed,
but for those in baptism reborn,
who to the Almighty God have sworn
to remain always virgin, pure,
so long as life on earth endure,
such is impossible." Then said she :
" My Prince, even as you say, let be,
but grant me yet this only prayer,
to clasp me in your arms to-night,
and with the first of the morning light
I will deny the gods, I swear,
and become Christian ; think of me,

a soul nigh lost eternally,
whom you may save ; the joy in Heaven
over one sinner saved they say
is greater than for righteous seven ;
and think of Timothy whom Paul
did circumcise that he might stay
the greater evil with the small."

Thus tempted him this subtle maid,
urged by the dæmon who is learned
as any monk in holy writ.

And in his veins the proud blood burned
and all his senses for her yearned,
exquisitely pleading there
with eyes, lips, tongue and body swayed
as a flame wavers in the air.

Then fell the Prince on his knees and prayed :
" O Lord, in Thee hath Joasaph trusted ;
let him not be discomfited."

And as he prayed sleep came to him
and touched those long curved lashes dim
with tears and strife ; and sleepless thus
descended Angels and they bore
him to a garden marvellous,
adorned with trees whose foliage made
sweet music, and a rivulet wound
curve upon curve in the cool shade,
and groups celestial sitting round,
conversed, a heavenly company.

And Joasaph aye wondered more ;
and as he went he seemed to be
within the walls of a fair city ;
resplendent, litten from above
with a light which seemed both light and love.
And in this place for every breath
he would have died an earthly death,
and musing as he walked he saith :

“ I will remain for ever here
beneath the shadow of the trees,
or in the city wandering
will harken to the speech of these,
which is most heavenly sweet and clear ;
and mayhap with long sojourning
I shall come like them, fair as they,
and know the manner of their speech,
and hear the wisdom which they teach.”
Then a voice sounded in his ear :
“ Mayhap upon a distant day
with sorrow, sweat and travail borne
you may come hither, but not near
is your mortality outworn ;
watch then and pray, for many a year.”
Sudden the Prince was carried thence,
hurtling through air, till in his face
struck a foul odour, and he stood
upon the brink of a dark place,
which reeked as though with pestilence ;
where as worms coil in rotten wood
legions of dæmons bit and tore
and healed and tortured evermore
the loathsome bodies of the lost.
Then the spirit took him back again
and feverish on his couch he tost,
fearful of hell and hellish pain,
craving for Paradise amain.
So the King feared lest he should die,
and Theodas sent that he should try
to heal him with his wizardry.
But ere the dread magician trod
the palace steps, Prince Joasaph knew
the advent of the foe of God
by all his airy fiends attended.
As a blow in his face these words he threw :

“Hark, thou abode of sin abysmal,
blacker than darkness palpable,
thou seed of Babylon descended
from those that built the tower Chaldæan,
by which the whole world went astray ;
meat for the flames, thou beast unclean,
which turns the traveller from his way.
Thou spawn of hell, dost thou not know
that the sun shines on all below
indifferently, and metals grow
from black to red in the bright flame,
nor are the metals nor the sun
therefore defiled?—thus Jesus came
and on the cross a death of shame
for mortals suffered every one.”

“But if He be the most High God!”
said Theodas, “wherefore did He choose
from the vile people of the Jews
twelve of the vilest, wherefore trod
a land remote?” Then the Prince: “Thou art
the ass who heard the harp resound
in music sweet, yet cropped the ground,
unconscious of the melody,
which found no echo in his heart
or the aspic who will stop his ear,
lest he the charmer’s song shall hear.
Ay! if the Ethiopian change his skin,
or the leopard his diversity,
then mayest thou change thy coat of sin :
and the heaven and the earth shall pass away,
but My word shall remain alway.
Ye harken not to the fishermen,
to the heavenly trumpeters sent to men,
but think that the images once made
to adorn the memory of the brave,
since those lost times have ever stayed

as gods with us to slay or save.
For the dæmons who are crafty folk
seeing that here somehow was smoke,
themselves indeed supplied the fire,
haunting the statues and deceiving
with lies the faith of the believing,
thereafter damned to anguish dire.
Thus these things were till Christ descended
and those that willed their errors mended.
By the word of the Lord were the skies established,
and of His Spirit He created
all things that in the world exist.”
Then Theodas, having heard with wonder
these words of wisdom, made no answer,
but as one struck with sudden thunder,
knew the Lord, and his soul had sight,
and he would strive to reach the light.
Therefore in council : “ Truth,” he cried,
doth with Prince Joasaph abide.
Great is the Christian’s God, and great
their faith and their mysteries excellent.”
Then turning to Joasaph, “ Too late
I come,” he said, “ but others may
follow thee on the holy way,
and learn to fly the road I went.”
“ Not so,” said the Prince, “ but as a son
returning from a distant land
whom grasps his father by the hand,—
thus God will welcome every one
though he come but when life is almost done.”
Thus Joasaph spoke, and on Abenner
gazed all the ministers of state.
Deep sunk in thought he pondered there,
and the breath of the councillors as they sat
waiting his verdict vibrated
like the weighing scales which hesitate

till the full measure of the weight
weighs one side down. Then towards them turned,
with changèd voice these words he said :

“ My lieges, in the lapse of time
full many a noble city falls,
whereof the tracing of the walls
which once to Heaven rose sublime
scarcely at all may be discerned,
and as of cities, so of kings,
whose puissance from the high gods springs ;
they have their budding time, their June,
their fervid summer, but too soon
comes autumn with that scythe of his,
and soon is winter shivering there,
—old age with snowflakes in his hair.

And since even kings and kingdoms end,
it may be that the gods too wane,
mayhap we sacrifice in vain,
adoring dying deities,
while with the young, new god to friend
all golden-haired prosperities
may on my kingdom come again.

Therefore to my belovèd son
Prince Joasaph, whom all men love,
the province Antelar I give,

• of all my lands the fairest one.

There let him dwell, and in each grove
he shall worship Jesus Christ the while,
and thus for five years he shall live,
and if perchance the new god smile,
and the land and its folk be prosperous,
then everywhere it shall be thus
as in Antelar, for I would serve
those gods alone who can preserve,
whose arm is long to heal or harm ;
they are wiser than the wisest kings,

whose power the span of a lifetime rings." Thus spake Abenner, and Joasaph sighed, but thither went where his sire him sent. And in a year Abenner died, and the folk of his kingdom loudly cried for the gods who were in Antelar, since there the folk were happier far and richer too than anywhere in all the land of Abenner. So Joasaph came from Antelar, and all the nations near and far sent embassies with presents rare, and he was crowned King of the land. Now his first thought when gathered there the ambassadors in order stand, was how the Christian faith should reach everywhere in the land of each. Therefore he called Barachias (the same as once with Nachor was). Barachias said : " In Antelar a thousand youthful Christians are ; let us send them forth to preach the word to your subjects who have never heard even the name of Christ." And so forth went the sowers for to sow the seed that sprung in Antelar. And myriad heads of Christian corn sprung from the clay of a creed outworn. But soon the Prince of power grew tired, and soon with all his soul desired Barlaam his friend once more to greet, to sit once more at the hermit's feet. Therefore he took his golden crown and gave it to Barachias, who as the new King crownèd was, and as night fell he left the town

mounted upon his steed alone,
and faring through the forest lone
there met him in a moongirt space
a maiden with a magic face,
and moving as she walked the air
the Princess stood beside him there.
Uncoiled her ruinous tresses shone,
sunlight and moonlight mixed in one,
down from the storehouse of the skies
twin stars had come into her eyes,
her lips, the gates of Paradise,
half opened as she smiled and said :
“ O Joasaph, our marriage bed
within this forest glade is spread ;
come, I am made of earth and heaven,
or only earth, or only heaven,
and as you will, so shall be given
such joys as tasted once make seem
the bliss you seek an empty dream ;
with me to feel the fires of hell
were heaven, without me heaven were hell.”
But stronger Joasaph as she
was fairer, and he passed her by
nor harkened to the barbèd cry
she uttered as she saw him flee.
Then as the morning light first drew
those veils of hers from off the day,
hunger and thirst King Joasaph knew ;
and from the branches of a tree
which bowed toward him on his way
he plucked the fruit, and lo, a voice
came from the tree : “ Rejoice, rejoice,
my fruit is plucked by Joasaph
who in him all the virtues hath.”
Onward fared Joasaph, and the sun
blazed in the heaven as he passed

those green spiked shrubs which are the last
to fringe the desert when is done
the forest's due, but lo ! from one
sprang forth a tiger, which did stand
barred black and yellow in the sand,
roaring on Joasaph, but he
passed toward the desert evenly,
smiling that such a monster roared
against the freedman of the Lord,
as though the fear of bodily pain
could conquer him 'gainst whom were vain
the magic face, the magic spell.
Now nigh the spot doth Barlaam dwell,
where is the only desert well,
and where the one wide-spreading palm
gives food and shelters from the harm
of the angry sun, and Joasaph
to guide his steps the vision hath
of the old saint who sleeps and prays
and joins the circle of his days.
Thus each met other, and the rest
with the desert sand is covered best,
as were their bodies when they passed
hand in hand to the Lord at the last.

PART III

THE MEETING OF THE
CREEDS

ARGUMENT

AL ZOBEIR, his Mohammedan host, thanks John of Damascus for the legend—suddenly an Æthiopian, called in the narrative ‘Man of Ind’ (though he is not an Indian, but an African who has been in India and become converted to Buddhism), breaks in upon the discussion—he asserts that the tale of Barlaam and Joasaph is really Buddhism, not Christianity—he states some of the main tenets of Buddhism—John of Damascus retorts angrily—Al Zobeir, however, begs the Æthiopian Buddhist to tell him more of Buddhism—the Buddhist rises, and a dialogue ensues on the nature of the soul and of individuality—our deeds are our Karma or soul—no man can escape the consequences of his evil deeds—the Buddhist continues his narrative, briefly referring to the legend of Barlaam and Joasaph—the Buddha’s birth, youth, and marriage, and the birth of his son Rahula—the Buddha leaves his home, his wife Yashodore, and his child, making the Great Renunciation—his asceticism—he finds the middle way of moderation—his disciples leave him—he obtains complete insight beneath the bodhi tree—he is tempted vainly by Mara (the Great Enlightenment)—he

goes to Benares—he teaches the people in the deer park—his interview with his father, the King—the King's grief at losing his son—the Buddha comforts his father—Yashodora—her regrets at losing her husband—he visits and blesses her—conversion of his son Rahula—the Buddha leaves his home to preach—the Buddha's former lives—the tale of Ambapali, the courtesan—how she feasted the Buddha and outran the Lords of Vaishali upon the noble eightfold path—the Æthiopian regrets that he cannot discourse of the disciples of the Buddha, nor speak at length of his teaching—he tells how the Buddha came to the grove of the Mallas—he teaches Ananda, his favourite disciple—having accomplished his task of enlightening the world, he will seek the eternal rest of Nirvana—he prophesies the coming of Buddha Maitreya, the Buddha of kindness, within five hundred years of his death—the Buddha speaks for the last time—death of the Buddha—the heavens and the earth are convulsed—the miraculous rain of mandara blossoms which falls from heaven—the Mallas bear his body to Kusinara—on the way they stop to permit a disciple to adore the remains—the ambassadors from the seven kingdoms demand each a share of the relics—the coming strife is appeased by the quotation of the Buddha's words—the ashes and the remains are divided—the Æthiopian concludes—Al Zobeir speaks of the Arabs before the coming of the Prophet—their customs and beliefs—the Prophet has the first vision of Gabriel—and the second—he preaches the faith of Islam—the first believers—the Koreish (the aristocracy of Mecca) doubt and oppose the Prophet, though he is one of their number—the Prophet engages a poet to defend him against the satires of his enemies—the flight from Mecca to Medina—Ali—incidents of the flight—Bedr, the first battle of Islam, between the Prophet, supported by the Companions and the Helpers

(the Medinans) and the Meccans—victory of the Prophet—Medina fortified—the Prophet invites Heraclius, Emperor of the East, and the Chosröes (King) of Persia, to embrace Islam—they scornfully reject the offer—Khalid, the Sword of God, joins the Prophet—the Prophet surrounds Mecca—Mecca capitulates—the Prophet peacefully occupies Mecca—he grows rapidly old—he makes the last pilgrimage—he visits the tombs of his departed friends—he preaches for the last time in the mosque—his death—Aïcha watches him as he sleeps the last sleep—Al Zobeir speaks of the Faith—the Unity of God—the Koran—Adam—Eblis—the Fall—the Tent that was let down from Heaven—the Black Stone—Hagar and Ishmaël—Abraham builds the Temple with the help of Ishmaël—Eblis driven away—Gabriel teaches the rites—Abraham calls to all men to come and worship God—Patriarchs mentioned—Solomon and his horses—his flying carpet—his lapwing—Balkis, Queen of Saba, visits Solomon—her admiration for Solomon—the tale of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus and their dog—Al Zobeir goes on to tell of the celestial hierarchy—Gabriel and the other angels—the jinn or genii—the giants—the Judgment Day—how sinners are beaten in their graves—soul and body are joined together again—the End of the World—signs and portents—Mansour denies that Christ will descend upon the white tower near Damascus—Al Zobeir and Mansour argue on the double nature of Christ—each accuses the other of idolatry—the Black Stone is for Islam divine as the Cross—the dispute becomes bitter—but friendship is superior even to creeds—Al Zobeir continues to speak of signs of the end of the world—the blasts blown on the trumpets which shall announce the Last Judgment—the Last Judgment—Mohammad alone of the Prophets will dare to intercede for the faithful—the body and soul of sinful man will plead each for his own salvation—both

will be damned—God will tell the story of the Blind and the Lamé before damning soul and body—Gabriel weighs the deeds of each in his scale—the bridge which leads to Paradise—how the Seven Hells are beneath it—Seven Hells mentioned—Hypocrites condemned to the lowest Hell—Al Araf, the wall between Heaven and Hell—how the blessed will enjoy sitting upon it and watching the pains of the damned—Abraham sits on the wall and converses with a former friend in torment—Abraham describes Paradise and its joys—he holds out hope that his friend may yet enter Paradise after many million years of torment—supreme bliss only obtained by certain of the blessed—Iman and Din, the halves of Islam, described—Al Zobeir is about to tell of Din, but is interrupted by the call to prayer—Din described—Mansour muses on his youth—he recalls his vision of the Blessed Virgin—Al Zobeir speaks of almsgiving—a tale of the test of generosity—the audience beg Al Zobeir to tell them of the events which occurred after the death of the Prophet—Al Zobeir consents—Omar's belief that the Prophet would never die—Abou Bekr proves this to be false—the Meccans, Abou Bekr and Omar, the friends of the Prophet, win the day, and secure the election of Abou Bekr to be Kaliph over all Islam, in despite of the opposition of the Medinans—the meeting hall of the Medinans—the struggle described—Abou Bekr elected Kaliph—the False Prophet Moseilama defeated by the general Khalid, the Sword of God, at the Battle of the Garden of Death—Khalid's remarkable wedding—Khalid advances on Persia—wins the Battle of the Chains—Tigris, Euphrates, and Babylon—their conversation—Khalid wins the Battle of Walaja—he encourages his soldiers with promise of booty—the Battle of the River of Blood—Khalid keeps his oath to the Lord—the Kaliph Abou Bekr's delight at receiving the immense spoil sent from Persia by Khalid—

Khalid continues his victories in Persia—Khalid leaves Persia, and visits Mecca secretly, to perform the duties of religion—he returns and meets his army at Hira—Heraclius, Emperor of the East, moves on Syria with a great army—levée en masse of the Faithful—Romans encamp on the plain Wacusa—they are blockaded by the Faithful—Khalid recalled from Persia—his marvellous march across the desert to Syria—the bramble-bush—he effects the junction of his force with the main army of Islam—he obtains supreme command—Battle of the Yermuk—total defeat of the Romans—death of Abou Bekr—Omar succeeds him as Kaliph—Khalid superseded in the command—the Faithful move on Damascus—Khalid's feat of arms—his discomfiture owing to treaty concluded by his military superior—Damascus capitulates—the Emperor flies northward, pursued by the Faithful—his farewell to the Holy Land—Fall of Jerusalem—Omar's magnanimous behaviour to the Christians—he founds the Mosque of Omar—disgrace of Khalid—due to private spite of Omar—wholly unmerited—lonely death of Khalid—Fighting in Persia—Battles of the Bridge, the Tens—Sad takes command of the new army and marches on Persia—an embassy sent to Yezdegird, King of Persia—the terms of Islam scornfully rejected—the Faithful encamp at Kadesia, on the Euphrates—Rustem commands the Persians—malady of Sad—First Day's battle—episode of Selma and Majain—doubtful issue of First Day—the Second Day—Cacaa's heroism—the flight of the Elephants—the Third Day's Battle—the issue still doubtful—the Night of Clangour—total defeat of the Persians—the death of Rustem—Yezdegird flies from his capital, Madain, which is occupied by the Faithful—his wonderful treasures—Yezdegird slain on the banks of the Oxus—Omar assassinated in Mecca—Othman succeeds him as Kaliph—weakness of Othman—Othman besieged

in his palace in Mecca—murder of Othman—Ali succeeds to the Kaliphate—revolt of Muavia, governor of Syria—Aïcha, widow of the Prophet—her intrigues—the Battle of the Camel in Persia—Ali victorious—Aïcha returns to Mecca—Ali's troubles with the faithless Kufans—he marches to meet Muavia—the Battle of Siffin—subtle dealing of Amrou—the Law of the Lord—Ali forced to cease fighting—arbitrators chosen between Ali and Muavia—they meet at Duma—Ali's representative outwitted by Amrou, Muavia's representative—Muavia called Kaliph of all Islam—Muavia, founder of the Ommyad dynasty reigning in Damascus and over all Islam at the date of the poem—Al Zobeir declares that Muavia was rightfully named Kaliph, and praises his descendant Merwan, then ruling—Al Zobeir concludes his narrative—appearance of the masked Prophet—he declares himself to be a Persian—he curses the reigning Ommyad dynasty and predicts its downfall—he speaks of unrest in Persia, and foretells the coming downfall of the Ommyads, then reigning over all Islam from Damascus—narrative of the disasters which befell the Prophet's family, caused by the schism in Islam upon the accession of Ali and the revolt of Muavia, governor of Syria—the Persian hesitates where to begin his narrative—he selects the episode of the murder of Ali—then tells of the murder of Ali's elder son Hasan—then approaches the tragedy of Kerbela, where Hosein, younger son of Ali, and rightful heir to the Kaliphate, was murdered by order of the Kaliph Yazid, together with sixteen other descendants of the Prophet—Muslim offers to go from Mecca to Kufa in Persia that he may test the temper of the Kufans and find if they will be ready to die for the Imam Hosein—Muslim murdered by Ziad, governor of Kufa—Hosein, unaware of the murder, leaves Mecca for Kufa with his whole family, men, women, and children—he meets with Hâr

near Kufa he encamps on the Plain of Kerbela near Kufa—Sad, general of the Syrian and Persian army, attempts to make Hosein capitulate without guarantees of any kind—Sad superseded by the accursed Shimar—Hosein's family refuses to leave him in his peril—he fortifies his camp—the King of the Fairies offers to destroy the holy Imam's enemies—Hosein refuses the offer—heroic death of Ali Akbar, Hosein's eldest son—one by one the Family of the Cloak are murdered as they fight heroically—Hosein, the Imam, mounts his steed—his infant son murdered in his arms—the murder of the Holy Imam by the accursed Shimar—the grief of Leila his wife and of his sisters—the conduct of Yazid when the head of Hosein is brought to him—the Persian prophecies of the Last Day—the Patriarchs strive each to save himself alone—Ali pleads in vain for his people to God—even the Prophet fails to obtain pardon for them—Fatima, mother of Hosein and wife of Ali, goes to Kerbela—Hosein rises from the grave—the faithful are saved at his intercession—the Persian concludes by cursing the usurping Kaliphs, Omar, Abou Bekr, and Othman, who wrongfully preceded Ali in the Kaliphate—he then curses Muavia and finally Yazid, who ordered the massacre of Kerbela—he goes on his way unhindered by any of those present—Al Zobeir, being chief minister for the reigning dynasty of Ommyads, makes an apology for them—Al Zobeir concludes, and John Mansour speaks of the blasphemy of the Persian who has stolen from Christianity—the Buddhist suggests that both Persian and Christian have borrowed from others—he advises all to seek Nirvana—he departs—John of Damascus bids farewell to Al Zobeir, and returns to his monastery—the Creeds have met and parted.

“ THUS ends the tale of the prophets twain,
one born in purple and both to pain,”
said the saint ; and for a time there fell
silence on that strange company,
as when on an island in the sea
meet birds strayed thither from very far :
for faithful and Christian, infidel
were gathered there beneath the palms
and heard the fountain’s tinkling notes
which to the speaker music are,
bearing his thought as on white arms,
or speaking to him from the throats
of the cooing doves which come and go,
and the very marble seems to know.
Awhile they mused and harkened there
to the simple sounds which filled the air,
telling perchance a tale more true
than any prophet, if we knew
the meaning of that speech more old
than any scripture writ in gold.
They mused awhile and John raised up
to his parched lips the carven cup
and quaffed the grape with Zobeir.
Then from his place the great Vizier
rose and thus spake Al Zobeir :
“ I thank you, John Mansour, my friend,
for this your tale, wherein you blend
evil with good and false with true
as ever the Christians wont to do ;
but none like you, methinks, can lend
to the false like bloom, nor for the true
broider so fair the mantle due.
May Allah’s blessing light on you ;
long may you live that He may deign
make all your wisdom not in vain.”
He spake and silence came again

upon that bright-eyed company.
Tinkled the fountains, softly cooed
the doves in pleasant interlude.
Then sudden in the crowd arose
a man carved out of ebony.
His voice resounded as a bell,
pealed beneath heaven's canopy.
"Mansour," said he, "much wisdom is
in this your tale ; and light it throws
on the Path a little ; but such a tale
wearing the yellow Buddhist veil
which changeth much, for me did gleam
years, years ago, unless I dream,
in the land whence come those gems which shine
upon the Christ you call divine.
And for this tale hath travelled far
and subtle the Christian doctors are
to steal the lotus blooms that blow
in the great stream which long ago
Gautama bridged that all mankind,
crossing, Enlightenment should find ;
steal and their blossoms are a snare
wound 'mid the thorns in Jesus' hair ;
'tis fitting that I now reveal
the truth which those your words conceal.
No God there is as you declare
who waits and watches all men do
and metes his penance, as the snare
on the poor birds which toward it flew
in ignorance. No God doth wait
for man at the opening of death's gate.
No soul there is which wings its flight
hellward nor heavenward through the night,
nor hears in hearing, sees in sight,
nor dwells a mystery out of sight
behind our senses, nor passes on

from one to another ; but we burn
as a lamp burns and is the same
though thrice extinguished be its flame
and thrice relit ; for all men yearn
and all desires pour oil upon
the flame of life.

Thus all men think and say and do
followeth each as his shadow true
till lust be dead and each may merge
in the great sea withouten surge,
withouten billows, calm and free
beyond all thought, ineffably,
as would be One Thing everywhere
when nought were left to make compare.
That is Nirvana and the road
thither is eightfold as he showed,
lit by the noble truths fourfold,
each glittering in priceless gold.
And the first truth is life on earth,
which is all sorrow from our birth
onward through growth and pain till death
shall take in pain our latest breath.
And sad it is when man must dwell
with those whose presence is a hell,
and to leave those our life made glad
for us and them is very sad.
And the second truth is suffering's cause,
whereof Lord Buddha found the laws.
Lust in its thousand forms surrounds
our senses and their action bounds.
The dream of life is born and thirst
of pleasure leads us to the worst.
Baited with pleasure is the net
and pain the guerdon all men get
who live for self ; and truth the third
as the second's echo should be heard.

'Tis sorrow's ceasing. He who knows
the birth of self and chokes desire
is free from lust, and the raging fire
which finds no fuel sinks at last
to rest in the empty furnace blast.
And the fourth truth is the path which finding
man's self must vanish and all the blinding
which from this fell illusion flows.
And harken all, that all may tread
the eightfold path. Right knowledge first
holds forth the torch on right resolve,
right speech, right acts, and right rehearsed
our efforts and our livelihood
sought in such manner as is good.
Right thought must guide our mind to the light
and calm his mind who lives aright.
These were the very words he said."
He paused, and as he paused upsprung
the saint flamboyant : " Man of Ind,
Sathan himself speaks with thy tongue,
informs thy body, smeareth black
with pitch thy skin for Hell's own burning.
Thou sayest I stole and stealing sinned
taking thy serpent tale of Ind
hither by devious routes come gliding,
beneath Damascus rose-trees hiding.
I sinned indeed as sins the man
who plucks his venom from the snake
and of its skin a charm doth make,
a barred and spotted talisman :
such blame scarce asks the heel of spurning.
And in the tale, of my God I told
whose goings forth are from of old,
and of his son the Foreordained
coming in excellent glory down,
Saviour of all men, as foretold.

To These thy Buddha yields his place,
thy soulless Buddha who disdained
all but the few, all gods denied
seeking within himself for grace.
An heavenly for an human crown
made I to shine on Barlaam's brow,
I opened before Joasaph's eyes
the real gates of Paradise
Thou sayest I stole : take answer now :
Thou liest as thy Buddha lied."
Here rose Zobeir and : " Tell us more,
O man of India, of your lore,
flashed your short speech as do the eyes
of a woman who hides all again
and may be nought and have smiled in vain,
or as a Damasc rosebud she
burst into blossom suddenly,
her veils removed of misty rain
and scent with heaven the sparkling plain.
Therefore remove those veils and first
tell of the soul ; relight once more
that lamp whose thrice-extinguished flame
leaves my mind darker than before
your curious speech made flash the same.
And friend Mansour, you shall endure
here in my palace the free speech
of the man of ebony and to each,
as each to you give hearing due,
nor into flames of fury burst,
as when Isaurian Leo roared
against the worship of your Lord.
Therefore stand forth, O ebony man,
speak and be sure you are secure
here where the Prophet's banner waves,
to guard in peace the great Koran ;
for whom Allah wills He wins and saves."

Then stood that man of ebony forth
 serene, and, "Sir, no fear nor wrath
 again can ever shake my mind ;
 but I thank you that your speech is kind
 and I am fain that you should gain
 that Path which is never found in vain.
 Now of the soul and let the globe
 of the lamp at the first your darkness probe.
 Now say, Zobeir, were a man to light
 a lamp which burned through the whole night ;
 tell me, I pray you, is the flame
 of the first and the second watch the same ? "
 Then mused Zobeir and the marble court
 waited in silence on his thought.
 Smoothed at the last his brow and he said :
 " Nay, for the flame of the first is fled."
 " Then are they twain," said the other. " Nay,"
 cried Zobeir, " for the oil's the same,
 the light and the purpose to make bright."
 " Then are those flames of yesterday
 yet burning in the lamp the same,
 filled with the same oil, giving light
 to the same room the same ? " " They might
 be quenched in the day," the answer came.
 Said the man of Ind : " Suppose the flame
 of the first watch quenched in the second, is
 the flame of the first watch still the same
 if it burn in the third ? " " In a sense the same,
 in a sense 'tis another flame, I wis."
 " Then tell me, Zobeir, counts for aught
 the time since the flame was quenched in the
 thought :
 this flame is the same or not the same ? "
 " Nay," answered Zobeir, " it does not,
 for whether an age or an instant passed
 or whether the lamp were quenched or not,

likeness and difference still must last."

"Then," said the Indian: "The flame burning to-day is the same in a way, in a way is other since yesterday, changing each moment, and the same are the flames which with equal power illumine the darkness of the self-same room.

Now, say, if a man think just as you, feel as you feel, act as you do, is that man not the same man as you?"

"Nay, nay, he is other," Zobeir cried.

"Then you would say 'one laws holds sway over all the world save Zobeir.'"

Then the Moslem turned his head aside, and "Nay," said he, "in the earthly sphere one law rules all; yet am I other than that twin self my very brother, though he do as I do, though he feel as I feel, though the mirror asked of each reveal ever the same face." "You speak true,"

said the ebon man, "but say, at school if a fool get learning, are the fool and the learned one, or are they two?"

"One are they, since the self-same being fool at the first, now comes to seeing."

"So," said the Indian, "you agree that as twin flames, so man must be, and that he whose self and whose every deed are the same as yours is you indeed."

"I must," said Zobeir. "Thus alone are yester-you and to-day's you one," closed the Indian, "not of bone nor of flesh nor of blood is Zobeir's nature, but thoughts and deeds, not form and feature are every man and every creature.

Whither those journey Zobeir hies,

stays where they tarry Zobeir's soul ;
thus in a sense you are the same
in a sense are other, but who denies
this sameness must deny the whole
of sameness everywhere—one name
cover two Zobeirs, one taking
the bowl, his thirst the other slaking."

" Well have you argued, man of Ind,
and as a strip of riband pinned,
my reason fluttering in the wind
fain would escape the lofty mast
and the arrow points which fix it fast,"
cried Zobeir, " but for all you say

myself alone do I *wish* to be,
now and hereafter, so that I
may cry to the self-same man as I :

' Know fellow, know, though you think like me,
live as I live, pray as I pray,
own what I own, are sad or glad
just when I am : *you are not I !* '"

" Therefore you cleave to self, and cleaving
will be ever dying and ever grieving,"

said the Indian ; " which of all these is *you*,
is the very self you cleave unto ?

the babe you were once, the youth, or the man
facing me here ? " But the Zephyr's sigh
in the leaves came only for reply

and the drops of the fountain laughed as they ran.

Then again the Indian : " *All* your deeds
in the lives outlived are your self, your soul ;
whether wheat or tares, you sowed the seeds,
whither these are blown is Zobeir's goal,
nor if in a cleft of the hills you hide,
nor under the swell of the ocean's tide,
can you escape the fruit which growing
is you yourself, both the sowed and the sowing.

' Ill deeds are the enemies that wait
to accuse you at the dreadful gate,'
as told Mansour ; good deeds the friend
whom also you must meet at the end
of each life lived ; good deeds will be true,
paying your debts, but good deeds are you
who save yourself.

But for ' God's wrath and the judgment seat,'
they are less than the hidden monster's bellow
made by a child to fright his fellow,
less than the dancing leaves which cheat,
red yellow and dead in the wind-swept street."

" A creed for stocks and stones is this :
no God and a soul which is not and is :"
cried out St John. But Zobeir : " Stay,
dear friend, your blame, you have said your say ;
now let the man of Ind disclose
the spring whence all his knowledge flows.

And friend of India come I pray,
stand you by me that I may be
more near to the dark mystery
which in your face and your speech doth dwell,
and of Gautama hear you tell."

Thereon that ebony man arose
and alone as the rhinoceros goes,
without dismay he thrud his way
up the white court, past curious faces,
past the cooing doves and the sunny spaces,
until 'neath Zobeir's giant palm
he stood erect and suave and calm.

" Of Gautama you bid me speak,"
said he, " so best it is I seek
our pearls of orient in the shell
of the Christian oyster which hideth them,
picked from the Buddha's diadem.
And first of the prophet and prince I tell.

Gautama was the prince to whom
came the Buddha when he felt the gloom
of the palace-prison of Abenner ;
'twas the Buddha who at the tennis play
did strike the whirling ball on its way,
he weaned Gautama's eyes from the eyes
of maiden's longing and despair,
placed he to blot their image there.
Gautama mounted upon his steed,
but the Buddha his first free course did lead
to the door of the blind where the leper lies
at his feet who is made of miseries !
Yea, 'twas the Buddha Barlaam brought
to Joasaph that precious stone,
'fit for great prince's hand alone.'
'Twas Buddha's self Prince Joasaph taught,
discoursed of truth, and bade him tread
that path which alone to 'Heaven' led.
Now Buddha and Gautama are one
as a clear and a clouded sun are the sun,
and Barlaam and Joasaph are one,
as the moon in water is the moon,
and these from those their lustre borrow
as a thief steals gold which melts to sorrow.
Now of Gautama ye shall know
that he was born beyond the flow
of the Indian seas in a middle land,
as tells Mansour, and his father planned
an equal long felicity
for his son, the King that was to be
(though in no prison hid was he
to shield him from the ills of life).
But when of age he took to wife
fair Yashodore who filled for him
the cup of love and of life to the brim.
But never did his footsteps stray

along that bowered alley's way
where laughing maidens wait for the heart
and each will tear her own small part
till naught remain of the battle gay
save blood on the craving lips and sighs
where the bird of youth all murdered lies,
and the best with the worst together dies.
He lovèd her right royally,
he lovèd her right tenderly ;
they built together towers of bliss,
till wisdom made an end of this.
And ever from the lightfoot game
Gautama turned himself to dream
on life and life's infirmities ;
until men cried : ' What prince is here ?
a prince who cannot wield the spear,
nor cause the feathered arrow speed
home to the mark across the mead ?'
Therefore upon a certain day
descended to their meadow play
Gautama's self : the shaft obeyed
his lightest touch and split a hair
hung at a mile's length and he layed
one after one each trophy meet
before the King his father's feet,
the King his father sitting where
incense of triumph filled the air.
But vain the King's fond hope that he
thus prince of games would ever be
prince marksman of a quiet land.
Gautama turned him from the world,
and long remained in thought enfurled.
Then, as in Mansour's tale doth stand,
came to him visions, he beheld
a dying man, a man of eld,
a corpse decaying and a monk

of mien austere : these visions sunk
deep in his mind and were the seed
whereof came fruit of word and deed.
Alone he set him out to climb
the terraced heights of truth sublime,
alone he wrestled, and alone
the mighty victory he won.
But this not yet, for he must tear
forth from his bleeding heart those ties
which as a chain our families
wind round our lives, and wrestling there
upon the slopes a messenger
came from the King and cried : ‘ Return
O prince, for a son to you is born
and the whole realm with joy doth burn,
saith the King, and Princess Yashodore
made happy mother yester-morn
doth crave for the Prince at her side once more.’
From ocean depths of thought profound
swam up Gautama at the sound
of the courtier’s voice and thus he spake :
‘ This is a new bond hard to break.’
Then toward the town the twain went down
and drawing near a maiden sung
sweetest of all sweet songs among
the songs of triumph : ‘ Happy the father,
happy the wife, happy the mother
of such a son and husband ; ’ when
he heard the song a pearlèd chain
from his neck unclaspèd Gautama
and for her song bade give to her.
And the damsel when the necklace shone,
once his, now hers, began to dream :
‘ This chain’s for symbol I have won
Gautama’s heart,’ and many a scheme
to hold the treasured heart made she—

as well dream she had won the sea.
For at midnight on the self-same day,
softly Gautama made his way
to that still room where peacefully
slept Yashodora and her hand
upon Rahula's head was laid,
his babe and hers ; white lilies made
a silver circle round the bed ;
dim lamps in silver sconces burned.
A moment did Gautama stand
irresolute, for much he yearned
once in his arms to hold his son ;
but, for he feared lest he should waken
the sleeping mother, having taken
such leave as fondest eyes can look,
the palace and the past forsook.
Thus was the first great victory won
—the Great Renunciation.
Then mounting Kanthaka he rode
league upon league of night-bound road
with Chandaka the charioteer
until where blue Anoma flowed,
he paused, dismounted, did him off
his robes of sparkling princely gear
and these with Kanthaka bestowed
on Chandaka that he should bring
a world forsaken to the King.
A beggar passed in rags whereof
one is for Gautama, and now
alone he seeks the neighbouring town.
Hard by upon the mountain's brow
which on the moving streets looked down
dwelt hermits, and to one of these
came Gautama that he might know
the cure of love and life and woe.
Long dwelt he there and knew not ease.

For food a single sesame seed
must serve the long day's direst need ;
his body wavering as a reed
shook as he went deep merged in thought.
Thus living death for life he got.
And now a little company
followed his footsteps marvelling
at such an awful sanctity.
Thus peace he sought but found it not.
Alone one day as slowly, slowly
upon the earth he moved wholly
merged in thinking, fell away
his limbs and on the earth he lay.
Then sweet beyond the power of telling
music he heard from very far,
music as of a mandora
touched by a god and drawing near,
behold it sounded in his ear.
Then suddenly the music ended
and Indra from his heaven descended,
gazed on Gautama's eyes with eyes
infinite, wonderful, and wise.
No word he spake, but with his finger
he pointed where the sweet sounds linger
around the three-stringed mandora
touched by his hand in heaven afar.
And then he made as though again
he willed to wake the self-same strain.
But first he touched the topmost string—
shivered the air with crying shrill,
and next he touched the third, loose string—
flat fell the sound for want of wing—
but when the middle string touched he
came back the same sweet melody
as did the earth and the heaven fill
when Indra came to Gautama.

Thus as the antique legends say
Gautama found the middle way
and the path of abstinence forsook,
for ever after he partook
of meat and of drink in such degree
as asked a wise œconomy
of the body's forces. But the crowd
that had followed him now cried aloud :
' Here is no Master,' and departed—
for all agreed that the mind had need
of the body prostrate for its steed.
They left Gautama heavy-hearted.
But he rose high above his grief
and in himself he found relief.
Moving with steadier step he sought
the shadow of the bodhi tree;
more holy than all trees that be,
and plunged refreshed again in thought.
Then Mara, prince of evil, came
and called Gautama by his name :
' Lord of the Five Desires am I,
great prince,' he cried, ' and if you will
the empire of the earth and sky
in an instant at your feet shall lie.'
He spake, but Gautama was still
beneath the shadow of the tree.
Then all the air with dæmons fell
filled Mara as the legends tell,
quaked the fond earth as a new-made bride
whose spouse is severed from her side,
shook as the trailing vine's festoon
in the fury of the wild monsoon.
But still beneath the bodhi tree
unmoved he sat, and presently
calm came the storm, the dæmons fled
with Mara vanquished at their head :

the winds of hell blew sweet perfume,
the bolts of hell grew lotus bloom.
And here in the storm without is seen
figured the storm which raged within
Gautama's heart beneath the tree :
home, wealth, and power he had left to gain
peace, and for guerdon gat he pain ;
home, wealth, and power he could regain,
returning to the world again,
but peace no more.

Thus raged the storm without, within,
thus Mara strove the prince to win,
but he beneath the bodhi tree
sat with mind fixed immovably.

Won was the fight, the clouds of sorrow,
as a black to-day flies a radiant morrow,
fled now forever and the sun
soared to the zenith Buddha won.

This was the Great Enlightenment.

*' Long have I wandered long,' he sang,
' bound by the chains through births and pains
innumerable and felt the fang
of wild desire, of self on fire.*

*Found, it is found the cause,' he sang,
' of self on fire, of wild desire.*

*No house O architect for me
again can ever builded be ;
shattered are thy rafters, scattered
are thy roof timbers utterly,
no house thou buildest more for me.
Mine is Nirvana, mine, it lies
within my reach, before mine eyes ;
now, if I will it, now I may
pass now eternally away
out of existence, leave no trace
of me in this or in any place.*

*But love I bear thee, love, and stay,
Humanity, for thy dear sake
with mine own hands the bridge to make,
which if thou cross thou too shalt gain
freedom from birth and death and pain.'*

The world was silent as he sang.

And this is the meaning of the song.

Pondering beneath the bodhi tree
on birth and death, on right and wrong,
there passed before his inward eye
all the ills of the world, the misery
which for themselves men make to be,
craving for pleasure, and when they die
they find not peace, but aye returning
in the flames of self are ever burning.

Ignorance only, now he knew
for the cause whence all these sorrows grew
and from his mind all suffering fell
as water-drop from lotus bell.

Perfect enlightenment was his ;
his was it, if he willed, to cross
in the small boat as Buddhas olden
before him as the legends tell
alone had crossed to perfect bliss,
nor suffered ought of shame nor loss.

Yet he remained to build the golden
Great Bridge, by the Four Truths upholden
whereby you, I, and all may cross
the stream of life : no gain had he,
save that he loved humanity.

And, Sirs, our love he hath for this,
and when beneath the bodhi tree
won now was the great victory,
the Buddha rose, the Buddha bent
his steps toward the great city,
Benares hight, and as he went

there met him those who had forsaken
their master when the food was taken.
'Gautama, tell us,' questioned they,
'wherefore thy form and countenance
are come so beautiful, what ray
of things divine, what utterance
of god or dæmon maketh bright
thy being with effulgent light?'
Then turned the Buddha grandly round
as only Buddhas turn and spake:
'Gautama am I now no more,
but Buddha only, to expound
the truth, to roll the wheel of the law
of righteousness for all men's sake
upon the earth awhile I stay.
Come now where browse the forest deer,
come all the world the truth to hear.'
Then toward the park he made his way
followed by multitudes, and even
the gods descended from high heaven,
leaving it void. The evening
shone as a maiden shines whose neck
innumerable stars bedeck,
the darkling clouds her braided hair,
her flowing locks the depths of air,
her eyes the lotus opening
at moon-rise and her voice as bees
innumerable in summer trees.
The Buddha spake, and every word
sounded to each as his own speech—
to man, to god, to beast and bird.
'In the beginning is desire
blind and therefrom all being springs;
the senses and the mind aspire
to reach and touch external things;
the thirst of self is born and cleaving

brings with it growth of self continued
in births eternally renewed.
This is the cause of suffering.
No pain there is, no vice, no sin,
save what has crept with selfhood in.
Ignorance only is the root
whence grows for all this bitter fruit.
Slay ignorance and you have slain
the cause of birth and death and pain.’
And thus the jewelled windows wide
opened the Buddha to the world
and the Four Noble Truths unfurled
whereto the Eightfold Path is guide.”
Here stayed the Indian, but Zobeir
cried, “ Speak, I pray, and tell me more
of the Lord Buddha and his law
of righteousness ; pray tell me where
he dwelt and taught, and if in life
his ancient sire, his son and wife
again he saw, and if he died
as died *our* Prophet Mohammad,
or rapt from earth to heavenly bliss
no taste of the pains of death he had ?”
Then smiled and answered India this :
“ Zobeir, I fear ’tis all in vain
that I have striven to make plain
the noble Truths ; since he was mortal
the Buddha passed by death’s wide portal,
but to Nirvana, ne’er again
to be doomed to birth and death and pain.”
“ Where is Nirvana ?” asked Zobeir.
“ Where dwells the wind ?” “ Not anywhere,
yet is it here and everywhere,”
made answer Islam. “ Then just there
is the place Nirvana, O Zobeir,”
answered the Indian ; “ but to tell

of what to the Buddha's kin befell
asks but a word ; when the world had heard
the truth beneath Benares' trees,
the Buddha preached in many a town,
robed in his yellow beggar's gown,
and in his hand the bowl of wood
which held each day such sort of food
as chance and charity might please.
And now a mighty multitude
had joined the holy Brotherhood.
Far spread his fame until it came
unto his aged father's ears,
who, for he felt that now was near
the end of life, exceedingly
cravèd once more his son to see.
Therefore these words he sent : ' O son
as longs the lily for the sun,
so do I long to see thy face.'
Then came the Buddha to the place
where was his father, who mounted down
from his chariot to greet his son
—his son no more, the Holy One.
Then gazing on him, thus he spake :
' Return, return, my son to me.'
No answer did the Buddha make,
but looked upon him lovingly.
Then again the father : ' Thine to take
is all my kingdom, but to thee
all were as ashes, dear my son.'
And the Buddha answered : ' Full of grief
and love thy heart, O King, I know ;
but let the ties of love and of woe
which bind thee to thy son embrace
all fellow-beings in his place
and thou shalt find a sure relief,
coming to know a greater one

than ever was thine only son,—
 the Buddha : and shalt find release
 entering Nirvana's perfect peace.' .
 ' Wonderful is the change I feel,'
 answered the King, ' thy words reveal
 the outlines of omniscience ;
 my sorrow flies and I rejoice
 since thou hast made this mighty choice,
 renouncing all ;' and the King went thence
 to his palace and the Holy One
 unto the grove hard by the town.
 Arose the Buddha and the Sun
 the morrow on the earth together,
 and to the town the Holy One
 went bowl in hand his food to gather,
 begging from house to house ; men came
 to tell the King and he had shame
 (not yet the path was his) to know
 that his son a royal beggar went
 craving his daily nourishment
 within the walls of his own city,
 where he the King could all bestow.
 Therefore in haste he went him down
 to seek the beggar in the town ;
 and, ' Wherefore thus dost thou bring shame
 on me and on our ancient name ?
 Forgettest thou thine ancestry ?
 Is thy bowl empty ? Fill thy bowl
 from out our royal granary.'

Then the Buddha : ' Thou and thine may claim
 if so you will a glittering name,
 but *my* descent from Buddhas olden
 who begged as I, O King, is holden.'

The King was silent and again
 spake the Buddha : ' Custom wills, O King,
 that if a son a treasure gain,

the brightest jewel he shall bring
to his father for an offering.
Therefore receive of thy son's love
this jewel of his treasure-trove :
Arise, arise, and dream no more,
arise and harken to the law ;
follow the path of righteousness
which leadeth to eternal bliss.'
To the palace then they went together
and welcomed was the Buddha there
by all his kin, save only one—
the fair, the widowed Yashodore—
who in her chamber wobegone
counted her days of wifehood o'er.
And ' Surely *he* will come to me
if ever once he loved me true ;
seven years have flown since that still eve
when as we slept he gazed on you
and upon me, Rahula mine,
for the last time and did depart,
and nothing took of mine or thine,
save only what was his—my heart.
And were it mine to take or give
again to him, again I'd give.
Ah ! why so heavy on mine eyes
was laid the hand of sleep that night ?
I'd liefer ne'er have seen the skies
again than lose that blessed sight.
And when they told me now were shorn
those rippling locks from off thy head
and garbed in ancient rags and torn
that thou didst beg thy daily bread :
then fell my wealth of curl so dear,
my Lord, to thee upon a time,
fell with the closing of the shear
which made thee monk, and garments dim

and food from bowl of wood alone
are all my use since thou art gone.
And other Princes came and laid
themselves and kingdoms me before,
came and departed, for I said :
the Lord yet lives of Yashodore.’
She spake and wandered to and fro
within her chamber and her ear
catches the winds as they come and go
in the trees without, and far or near
no sound of the palace but strikes home
to her anxious heart : ‘Will he come, will he come?’
And now ’tis a sentinel’s passing tread
sounds the alarm of joy and of dread
in her heaving bosom, but quick despair
leaps back to claim his empire there
when she knows her error, and oft again
comes pain comes hope, comes hope comes pain
with the rustling of a leaf on the wall,
with the least sound of things most small.
But now a sound divine she hears
and now come joy and hopes and fears
riding in triumph over her mind.
She hears his step and speech refined
of every evil that it shone
as new-come angels ere they don
the robes of heaven and yet wear
the weed of earth made glorious there.
And, ‘Suffer her to come to me’
(thus to his followers he spake
as they drew near her chamber door),
‘for she hath grieved exceedingly,
and when I come her heart will break
unless she may her grief outpour.’
He entered in and Yashodore
held by his feet and wept full sore.

But when the floodgates opened wide
 had poured their crystal wealth of tear,
 her soul swam up upon the tide,
 and now she gazed into his face,
 and since she saw no longer there
 aught of the husband, but the Lord,
 the Buddha by all worlds adored,
 rising she went a little space,
 reverently harkening to his voice :
 ' Above all women now rejoice,
 for casting back my gaze I see
 thee in births past most excellent
 in love and faith and charity,
 in gentleness and purity,
 and when the Bodisât aspired
 to reach supreme enlightenment,
 then holy Yashodore desired
 to be his wife. Lo ! she hath done
 a splendid doing, she hath won
 the passage of eternal joy.'
 Thus spake the Buddha, and the boy
 Rahula to his mother came.
 ' There stands thy father, dear,' she said ;
 ' go thou to him and make thy claim,
 my son, for thine inheritance.'
 ' Mother, methought that long was dead
 the prince my father,' answered he,
 but going straightway, stood below :
 ' Father, behold a radiance
 thy very shadow seems to throw ;
 thy son am I, and I would fain
 that upon me thou shouldst bestow
 this shining for an heritage.'
 Then said the Buddha : ' Thou must gain
 thyself this shining, nor from me
 canst thou inherit seignorage,

nor piles of yellow conquering gold ;
but son, if thou art strong to hold
a mightier gift, 'tis thine to take
the glittering treasure of the mind,
the Noble Truths by which to find
the Eightfold Path.' And the boy replied :
'Sire, I will follow if thou wilt guide.'

And the old King did grieve full sore
to see his son his son no more
and with his grandchild pass together
out of the world of Kings for ever,
and through their living fingers must
ages of empire fall in dust.

Yet was this needful, nor again
did the Buddha tread that broad domain
which as a weighty burden he
threw off for immortality ;¹
but teaching, preaching, doing, being,
he moved on India, nowhere staying
more than to ope the eye of seeing ;
and all he said with all he did
chimed as the voice accompanied
by the ineffable sweet playing
of music on the magic reed,
save that his golden speech and deed
ask not frail echo's charioting
adown the dusty world's highways,
ask no vain word of blame or praise :
but are salvation.

Hark ! now ye hear his voice resound.
Lo ! here he points the path he found.
For you to follow." Then Zobeir,
equal to equal rose, and, "Sir,"
he said, "your Buddha lord and king

¹ That is Nirvana, which is not the extinction of being but the extinction of all desire.

methinks did do but a foolish thing
leaving his bright and fruitful lands
to herd with beggars ; let the great
nourish the poor with bounteous hands,
but let them, mindful of their state,
dwell in their place, nor cast away
on the winds of chance their power and sway."

Answered the Indian : " Sir, the law
of righteousness forbids the pride
of power and wealth and family,
for gazing back the Buddha saw
great Brahmans begging, beggars ride
in gold and purple panoply
according to the deeds of each,
upward or downward passing flowing
on the Samskaras till they reach
that knowledge which alone is knowing
and over their own selves prevail,
rend with their own hands Maya's veil.
Upward or down they pass and he,
the Buddha, in the lives gone by
dwells as its spirit in a tree
and is the rustling of its leaves,
throws shadow where the sun on high
burns on the plain the passer-by.
And upward mounting he achieves
the sum of all existences,
roams as a fish in the deep seas,
as jackal howls the passing nights,
as crow, as woodpecker delights
in deeds of winged piety,
flits as a snipe through rice-sown fields,
glides as a serpent, and the bites
of other serpents presently
as the snake-charmer healeth he.
He belloweth grandly as the bull,
and to his strength the waggon yields

which ere he came an hundred yoke
from the deep ruts had failed to pull
As eagle dwells he in high heaven,
as lion prowls the woods at even,
dying an-hungered willingly.
As deer he waits upon the stroke
of the starved woodman, as the squirrel
when the storm carries out to sea
his bright-eyed furry family
(thus do our ancient legends tell)
he toils to dry it with his tail,
and Sekra pitying saith to him :
' O squirrel toiling at the brim
of ocean's cup without avail,
now cease, for though as many men
as grains of sand upon this shore
strove to make less the ocean's store
of salt green drops a million years,
their toil as yours would be as vain
and ocean's cup nor less nor more,
save for the tribute of their tears.'
' O Sekra, were they men as you,'
answered the squirrel, ' that were true
which now you say ;' thereat anew
his tail he dips into the sea.
And Sekra stretching forth his hand
lifts the young squirrels safe to land,
amazed at such constancy.
As elephant upon his back
he bears the monarch, as its guide
he walks the elephant beside,
as king upon its back doth ride
in many births, as monk doth lack
by his own will the joys of life.
But never was he maid nor wife,
and always male, lest he should know
those sins which work frail women's woe.'

“ Ah ! There indeed was the Buddha wise,”
cried Zobeir, “ hid from all men’s sight,
let soulless woman’s form delight
her lord alone.” “ Not so, not so,
taught the Buddha, and that ye may know
the fair equality for all,
for male and female, great and small,
which in the Buddha’s doctrine lies,
hark to the tale of the courtesan,
fair Ambapali, how she bade
the Buddha to her glittering board
and the Likkhavi chiefs outran
upon the noble eightfold path,
for pearls of truth the story hath.
It happed upon a day the Lord
coming to Vaishali made glad
the heart of Ambapali going
to seek the shadow of her grove.
Wherefore in simple garments clad,
her jewel’s fire extinguishèd,
her long hair coiled upon her head,
she mounted on her chariot knowing
how great the honour done her, going
to thank the Lord as it behove.
And drawing near, she lit her down
and sought on foot the Holy One,
modestly seeking out a place
whence she might look upon his face,
yet not so far as that he could
hold speech with her if so he would.
And the Buddha turned to those by him :
‘ Behold,’ he said, ‘ this woman slim ;
narrow the circle of her arms,
yet have they clasped an empire round,
for mighty kings before her charms
have fallen conquered to the ground,

have sold to gaze into her eyes
an empire for a paradise.
All this her doing, yet, most rare
of women made so deadly fair,
behold she is become most wise,
and now is worthy to receive
the truth complete which Buddhas give.'
And as he spake, her face grew bright,
her body quivered for delight.
She rose and bowing low, she said :
' Will the Blessed Buddha deign to take
with me to-morrow eve his food ?
the Buddha and the brotherhood ?'
No answer did the Buddha make,
giving by silence his consent.
Fulfilled with joy, she rose and went
to her chariot, faring on her way,
and met the Likkhavi's array,
chariots and steeds caparisoned
in cloth of azure clasped with gold.
And the Likkhavi cried : ' Behold
Ambapali unparagoned
in all the world ; but we may not stay
in dalliance with thee on our way
to greet the Buddha and invite
his presence on the morrow's night
to feast with us.' ' My Lords,' she said,
to-morrow eve at set of the sun
he sups with me, the Holy One.'
' O Ambapali,' answerèd
the Likkhavi, ' if thou wilt yield
to us this honour, we will give
an hundred golden chariots filled
with rarest gems of land and sea.'
' My Lords,' said she, ' I would not leave
to you this honour for the fee

of all the realm of Vaishali.’
Then the Likkhavi went their way,
coming to Ambapali’s grove
to seek the Buddha, and they drove
in splendour as the full midday.
And the Buddha to the brethren said :
‘ If any here have ne’er beheld
the immortal gods, let him now give heed
to the Likkhavi charioted
like Indra’s self when he upheld
the world uplifted on his steed.’
And the Likkhavi mounted down
and came to the place of the Blessed One,
and sitting by his side they heard
respectfully the holy word.
Then they arose and bowing low :
‘ May the Blessed One,’ they said, ‘ bestow
an honour on the Likkhavi ;
may he deign to take to-morrow eve
his meal in the palace, ere he leave
this kingdom of our Vaishali.’
‘ To-morrow eve at set of the sun,
O Likkhavi,’ said the Holy One,
‘ my meal I take with the courtesan,
with Ambapali.’ Then before
the Buddha bowed they down once more
and on their chariots mounting ran
their course again to Vaishali.
But when to the palace home they came
they lifted up their hands and : ‘ Shame,’
they cried, ‘ is upon us, thus to be
defeated by the lissom girl,
by her whose head of wanton curl,
whose beauty as the lotus bloom,
marked her we thought for our plaything.
But lo ! she buildeth now the tomb

of all our pleasure, taketh wing,
before us on the eightfold path ;
victoriously now she hath
vied with her lords the Likkhavi.'
Thus mourned those mighty princes shorn
of the fair flower which did adorn
their dreams of pleasure, thus outdone
by a girl in the eyes of the Holy One.
But the morrow as the hour drew near
made ready the courtezan such cheer
as pleased the Buddha, cakes and rice,
honey and fruits and rarest ice,
and goblets of the cool well water,
as the wisdom of the Buddha taught her.
And through the night a messenger
sped like a white moth flying straight :
and to the grove he came and said,
' O Blessed One, the meal doth wait
thy glorious coming.' And the Lord
girt up his yellow robe and led
the brethren to the dwelling-place
of Ambapali and they sat
in order at her glittering board.
And Ambapali's form and face
shone forth with joy unspeakable.
Herself she served them and they ate.
When the meal was ended drawing nigh
to the Buddha, on the golden mat
where were his holy feet she sank.
And, ' O Blessed One,' she said, ' I thank
thee for the honour done to me,
yet crave another all as great :
this house of mine to dedicate
to thee and thy fraternity.'
The Buddha took that house of sin
come holy by his entering in,

and placing her himself beside,
he roused, instructed, edified
the courtesan who though she grew
in the mud of the lake as the lotus do,
yet bare a blossom fairer far
than ever lotus showed to star.
Now this is the tale of the courtesan
and in its telling you may see
the nothingness of great degree,
the woman swifter than the man
upon the path that leads to bliss,
though feebler far her mind than his,
though clinging robes and trailing hair
she must carry in the race with her.
But of the forty years and more
wherein the Buddha taught the law
of righteousness, though I fain would tell,
ere I to Islam say farewell,
yet must I hence upon my way
leaving ye here but blossoms stray
out of their season flowering
as the blossom of the shala tree
when the Lord Buddha ceased to be."
"Ah! tell us how the Buddha died,
tell of the brethren sorrowing,"
with voice expectant Zobeir cried.
Then India smiled, and "Many a day
would I fain discourse of the eightfold way,
and of the followers that knew
his voice and face, the glittering few,
of Kudatanta, Vishaka,
of rich Anathapindika,
of Jivaka who healed his wound,
of Shariputra, Bimbisara
the warlike King of Magadha,
of Anuruddha who did expound

those mysteries the most profound
—Dhyana and Abhinnya—
of Devadatta madly daring
to found an order for the sharing
of the Lord's truth who led astray
full many from the eightfold way,
and for his sin is doomed to pay
with myriad lives of suffering—
of these and others would I sing.
Sing of the last days long foretold,
of Chunda and the meal of boar,
of Ananda and the robe he wore,
like to the Lord's of burnished gold,
the gifts of Pusshaka, and though
the Buddha's robe of gold all through
shone ere he donned it, wondrous bright,
through it his body like a flame
burned and the robe all dull became
(twice thus in the Buddha's life, on the night
when he had reached supremest sight
beneath the bodhi tree and the last
when utterly away he passed
as ever Buddhas shine shone he,
bright beyond speech exceedingly),
sing of the Malla's grove and how
between the sister shala trees
Ananda spread the couch and now
facing the north, his mind at ease,
the Buddha rests for the last time
in this or in any earth or heaven.
Fain would I count the blossoms given
out of their season by the boughs,
for joy and sorrow showering
white petals on the couch sublime ;
fain catch the downward wafted vows
of the gods in heaven glorying

that now one greater far than they
Buddha Gautama passeth away
as pass the Buddhas from of old,
sing of the blessed words he told
unto Ananda grieving sore
that now the lamp he lit no more
would shine upon the world : ' Before,
Ananda, in the years bygone
have I instructed you that none
of things most near, of things most dear
can by their nature ere endure.
This truth I found, of this be sure :
The dream of self is the dream of sorrow
to be dissolvèd on the morrow.
Lo ! having given the excellent law
for man's salvation and fulfilled
those duties to mankind I willed,
I am resolved to seek that rest
which above all good things is best.
Ananda, long you have been near to me,
Ananda, long you have been dear to me,
beyond all measure ; you have done
a noble doing and if you
to the eightfold path remain but true,
by storm and shine, by moon and sun,
full soon from self and sense and pain
you too shall be freed, you too shall gain
the bliss that waits me, you shall rend
the veil of Maya hanging still
before those tender eyes that fill
even now with tears to lose your friend,
albeit he passeth by the gate
barred upon birth and death and fate.'
Ananda stemmed the tide of tears
welling within him, and he said :
' But who shall guide when you are sped ?'

And the Buddha answered thus his fears :
‘ Nor last nor first of the Buddhas I
to dwell on the earth ; I came to teach
the law of righteousness to each.
Siddhartha Gautama will die
but the Buddha liveth eternally,
for he is the truth and cannot die.
Five hundred years the truth will grow,
full twenty generations know
the eightfold path ere the clouds can spread
their mists before the light I shed.
Then in the stream of years will rise
another Buddha to reveal
the truth which error’s mists conceal ;
and the truth he teacheth is the same
as the truth I taught.’ Then Ananda said :
‘ How shall men know him otherwise ? ’
and the Buddha answered him : ‘ His name
Maitreya, the Buddha who is kind,’
will be the light whereby to find
this Buddha of the years to come.
Then the Mallas and their families
went to the grove where the Buddha came,
hoping to gain such meed of bliss
as falleth to the lot of some
who have been in the sight of the Holy One.
From his couch he spake : ‘ Ye have not done
enough in coming : to obey
the excellent law is the only way
leading from sorrow, vain it is
to gaze on the Buddha with a mind
which to the truth he taught is blind.
As the sick man who never saw
the leech may yet from medicine draw
full healing of his maladies ;
so he who dwelleth very far

from the Holy One, yet treads the path
the Buddha for companion hath.”
Low bowed the Mallas and went thence,
filled with an infinite reverence.
And to Ananda spake the Lord :
‘ Lo ! ended is the Master’s word.
Firm fixed the rules of the Order are ;
let the truth and the great rules ever stand
untouched by thine or by any hand,
being eternal, but in time
if the lesser rules ring out of chime
with the doing of a different day,
let them be altered, swept away,
as to the Order seemeth good.’
Then crōding round the brethren stood,
heartrung to hear the last words spoken.
And the Lord spake for the last time :
‘ Lo ! I alone of men have broken
the shell of the egg of ignorance.
Lo ! brethren, I, the most sublime,
the eldest of the sons of men,
my work completed, journey hence
into Nirvana, ne’er again
to taste of birth or death or pain.
Truth is eternal, but decay
informeth all that is mixed of clay.
Toil, therefore, toil with diligence
to win salvation.’
No more he spake and did advance
into the first deep stage of trance,
and thence through all until the last.
Then only in his mind remained
the sense of space without an end ;
which having ceased, the thought of thought
only within his ken was brought.
This being ended, then he passed

into that state where triumphs nought.
Then between sleep and waking he
floated awhile uncertainly.
Then passed sensation and idea
wholly away and Ananda cried,
weeping, 'The Lord of the World hath died.'
'Nay, brother, but his end is near,'
said Anuruddha, 'he will trace
full circle back to the same place,
ere he may vanish utterly.'
Even as he spake came back again
idea, sensation to the brain,
and between sleep and waking he
floated again uncertainly ;
then by those states he passed where nought
reigneth supreme, where the thought of thought,
where the thought of space alone may dwell,
and again in the fourfold trances fell.
And as from the fourth deep trance he passed
the Holy Buddha breathed his last.
Then the heart of the mighty earth was riven,
thunders pealed forth from highest heaven,
and of the brethren, those yet bound
in the chains of the passions fell to the ground
headlong, and in their anguish cried :
'Too soon hath the Blessed Buddha died !
too soon, too soon, hath the Holy One
passed from existence ; now the Light
of the world is quenched in trackless Night.'
'Enough ! enough ! weep not, I say ;
'tis true that the Lord hath passed away,
the work he willed to do being done,
since he, like all that is born to be,
by the law of being must decay ;
therefore be calm, to yourselves be true ;
grip fast the truth he taught to you.'

Stemmed Anuruddha thus their grief
and with Ananda found relief
as the vigils of the night sped by
in sad and happy memory.
But with the first of the morning's red
which over the face of the heavens sped
came the Mallas to the shala grove
to raise the pyre as it behove.
And a mighty company they bore
garlands and perfumes and a store
of glittering robes, and music sweet
danced in the air as danced their feet
rhythmically, reverently,
around the perfume-laden pyre,
and now the blue and the yellow fire
soars up to heaven, now they sing
loud songs of joy and of triumphing
as the empty palace built of clay,
its lord departed passeth away.
For they burned him as a King of Kings.
And as he burned the sun and the moon
withdrew their shining, quaked again
the heart of the earth, flew down on wings
of petal white from heaven a rain
of the flower mandara, so that soon
knee-deep in blossom all men stood ;
burst forth the peaceful streams in flood,
shivered the tall trees of the wood
as the aspen leaf. When all was burned,
save the white bones, the Mallas made
a lattice-work of spears around
that space of charred and of sacred ground
whereon they lay, and seven days long
with dance and music, speech and song,
garlands and perfumes homage paid
to the relics of the Holy One.

Then gathering up the bones they turned
their faces toward Kusinara :
' for since to us was the honour done
that in our kingdom passed away
the Lord of the world, 'tis fit and meet
that we erect a dagoba
wherein these sacred relics may
be guarded through the time to come.'
Thus spake the Mallas and with feet
falling in solemn cadence they
passed with their holy burden home ;
and as they journeyed they beheld
speeding toward them on the road
as to the mark an arrow flies
a naked hermit and his eyes
as a furnace in a sandpit glowed,
and in his hand a single flower
of the mandara bloom he held.
And as he came them near he cried :
' Seven days ago the Master died,
for of the great mandara shower
raining from heaven at the hour
his body burned, this single bloom
fell at my feet on the far hill
where is my cave, and lo I come,
ceaselessly journeying to fulfil
the rites of honour and reverence,
to the Lord of the world who hath gone hence.
Therefore I pray ye, Mallas, stay
your pious course while here I pay
that homage to the relics due.'
And the Mallas stayed and lifted down
by the roadside the golden case
which held the bones of the Blessed One,
(most holy here as in any place),
and with clasped hands and head bowed low

thrice round the case did the hermit go
and thrice the earth his forehead knew.
Then passed the Mallas on their way
with the relics to Kusinara,
and as the gates they came unto
met them in glittering array
ambassadors from kingdoms seven.
And the first from the King of Magadha,
shining in splendour as the heaven,
bowed to the Mallas and, ' 'tis due
that a part of the relics to my King,
to the Lord of Magadha I bring,
since of the same, the warrior caste,
was the Lord Buddha ere he passed
into Nirvana ; and to hold
the relics for all time to come
will the King build a mighty dome,
in substance of the purest gold,
which from a lake of sapphires blue
as the sun from heaven shall look through,
and honoured with a mighty feast
shall the relics be : ' now when he ceased,
upspoke in words of like portent
one whom the Likkhavi had sent,
glorious as he of Magadha :
spoke in like speech the Koliya,
and the kin Mallas of Pava.
And from the Sakiyas there came
likewise an embassy to claim
as the others shared to share the same.
' For yours is the land,' their discourse ran
where the life was ended, which began
beneath the palms of Kapila.
And the Brahman of Vethadipa,
as Brahman and as warrior
likewise in fervid speech made claim

by right of rank to share the same
 as the others. But the Mallas cried
 to the Brethren : ' Lo ! they speak in vain
 asking the relics ; since he died
 within the Mallas' broad domain
 'tis fitting that the relics lie
 complete beneath the dagoba
 which with our hands upraised on high
 shall shine above Kusinara.'
 Thereat the Brahman Dona mourned
 the coming strife, and thus he warned
 the Mallas and the empires claiming
 to guard the bones of the Holy One :
 ' Strive not at all, for every dart
 thou drivest in another's heart
 from curled mouth or from twanging bow
 backward a second course will run
 to pierce more surely than your aiming
 the heart and hand whence it did go—
 since each of all men is a part,
 since he is thou, since he thou art.
 This Truth the Blessed Buddha taught !'
 And the wisdom of the Holy One
 calmed the tossing waves of the storm begun,
 for the Mallas and the Empires cried :
 ' Into eight parts do *thou* divide,
 O Brahman Dona, the remains
 with fair division ;' and they brought
 the golden case and Dona made
 the fair division and he said :
 ' Not anything this case contains ;
 yet, sirs, the gift of the case I crave
 for it hath held the bones that are
 holiest in any earth or heaven,
 and over it a dagoba
 will I erect.' And the Mallas gave

the golden case—and all was given.
Thus did the Kings and the Mallas share
brotherlywise those relics there.
And from the Moriyas came one
speeding beneath the midday sun ;
and ‘Sirs,’ cried he, ‘my lords lay claim,
being likewise of the warrior name,
to a share of the bones of the Holy One!’
But the Mallas answered him that even
the case that had held the bones was given.
Mixed with the ashes of the pyre
were the ashes of those lords’ desire,
for straight their messenger gathered up
within the bowl of a carven cup
the embers of that mighty burning
and to the Moriyas returning
gave what of earth had come most nigh
to the body burned of the Most High.
And the Moriyas built a golden shrine
to guard the ashes which though the least
of the nine parts were yet divine
more than aught else of earth or sky,
and in their honour held a feast.
Thus, Zobeir, did the Buddha die,
merged in Nirvana utterly,
his work of love toward men being done.
But this my telling is as one
who standing by the shore of the sea
plungeth a hand into the brine,
and from his fingers fall the drops
glittering perchance if the sun shine,
but when his hand is empty stops
the tale of glittering crystal drops,
yet is each drop the mighty sea’s
and the ocean’s self is naught but these.”

He ceased and made as if to go
forth from the hall, but Zobeir cried :
“ Stay yet with us an hour, strange friend ;
sit by Mansour and make an end
of those your words of rivalry ;
stay, for I will not be denied ;
and of the rosaton let flow
within your cups the sister streams ;
stay, for indeed it ill beseems
the ancient hospitality
which is a pillar of our faith,
that while the sun on high is riding
forth on his way my guest outstriding
the gates of Zobeir darkeneth.”
Bowed to his host that ebon man,
and to Mansour he bowed again,
who rising from the spread divan
met bow with bow and pointed where
between the crescent and the cross
place for the lotus flower was.
Thus sat those three together there,
silent awhile as gently cooed
the doves in pleasant interlude,
tinkled the fountain as those bells
whereof the ancient prophet tells,
of silver and of ruddy gold
upon gay ladies’ feet of old.
Then “ Thanks,” said Zobeir, “ thanks to you,
who come to us mysteriously
out of the east and have unwound,
a poet from a single clue,
the web of Buddha’s history.
But what of truth you may have found
I care not ; this alone I know :
that as a spring from palmy mound
so do your words of eloquence flow

and prank with bloom the desert round.
Greater than sweetly so to sing
as that men's hearts to tears are wrought
for great deeds done the chronicling,
for fair loves lost remembering,
by Allah upon earth is nought.
And in our Araby of old,
with timbrels and with triumphing,
in marriage robes of white and gold
danced forth the women of the tribe,
wherefrom as dawns the star of morn
a mighty poet had been born.
The women with the men came forth
secure that never sneer nor gibe
could reach them more from any foe,
lest branded by their poet's wrath
down the long years his name should go.
Four things of old we Arabs had :
for diadems the turban wound,
for houses tents, for trenches swords
and poems sung at the fair Ocadh,
whereof the imperishable words
were history and fame and law,
which knowing, none need study more.
Such was the world the Prophet found,
and as a weapon thick with rust
into the fiery furnace thrust,
and drew it forth an angry red,
and smiting at the anvil's head
fashioned thereof a white new blade
which in the hands of heroes held
the world unto the Faith compelled.
For as alone in Hira's cave
upon Al Kadr that night of the year
which than a thousand moons is more
his mind to deepest thought he gave,

in the horizon's highest part
a being of mighty power he saw
who gradually drawing near
stood at the last two bows apart—
and he revealed what he revealed.
For in his hand a silken screed
he held and bade the Prophet read.
And when he could not : ' Read,' said he,
' what here is written plain for thee,
in the name of the Lord who hath created
all things that are and gave the pen
that man should use it unto men.'
With that he vanished and amated
the Prophet knew that he was he,
even the Archangel Gabriel,
sent down from heaven thus to tell
the will of God that he should turn
his mind those lesser arts to learn,
which till that hour he had ignored
as in the strife the naked sword
ignores the scabbard. Soon he knew
what of those lesser arts was due.
And on a certain day it happed
that pensive in his mantle wrapped,
as on the evil speech he mused
which the Koreish against him used,
once more unto him Gabriel came
and on the horizon loomed the same
nor less nor greater drawing near.
And ' O thou coverèd arise,
and preach and magnify the Lord
and make thy soiled garments clear ;
leave me to deal with him who lies,
saying that this My very word
is but of magic : cursed be he,
and cursed again eternally :

him will I cast where he shall dwell
bound in the lowest hell of hell.'
Thus spake the angel Gabriel.
No more the Prophet of the Lord
covered his face, but preached the word
which on Al Kadr the night of power
sent to the lowest heaven down,
to him by Gabriel was made known
in portions as to suit the need
imperious of each early hour,
and from this heaven-planted seed
spread Islam as a creeping flower
over the desert leaves of green.
What matter burning sands or skies
to the flower whose root is Paradise?
And first to pluck the bloom I ween
was the old Khadijah who had been
mother and mistress, wife and queen
unto the Prophet through long years
of doubt and danger, hopes and fears.
Second to pluck was Ebn Nawfal
the Christian learned in Hebrew lore
who when he found how Gabriel came
unto the Prophet as before
the angel unto Moses came,
knew and declared they were the same.
Third of believers, first of all,
by right of doing and of daring,
by right of peril seizing, sharing,
by glory of the green cloak worn
through the long watches of the night
victorious of the Prophet's flight,
whereof with coming of the morn
Islam unto the world was born,
was Ali, Portal of the Faith.
The first were these, when these were won,

‘ Though on my right you set the sun,
on the left the moon, you shall not stay
my enterprise,’ the Prophet saith
unto his kinsmen, as they pray
their kinsman that he seek not death
—preaching against those idols fair
Allat and Ozza, gods that were
gods till he came, for Araby.
And the Koreish against him made
a pact together and they laid
its words within the Kaaba
and the years passed by and ‘ You shall see
that the words inscribed against me
by the worm of the Lord devoured are,’
said the Prophet, and writhing out and in
the worm had eaten the words of sin.
Thus Faith was born to some who doubted,
but of the Koreish many flouted
the evident miracle of the Lord.
They doubted when on the star-strown track
borne on the wings of Alborak
unto Jerusalem he came
and rapt to the seventh heaven heard
the very speech of God, the same
that Moses heard on Sinaï.
They doubted though each golden word
soareth beyond the poet’s pen
and by the Prophet given to men
yet in the essence of God doth lie
eternal uncreate and upon
a vasty table by God’s throne
as a likeness from a mirror thrown
its words are writ and the decrees
of the past and the future lie with these.
And once a year the whole was shown
as a book to the Prophet silk enwrapped

adorned with gems of Paradise.
And when upon a day it happed
that the poet Labid witty and wise
saw by his heathen poem placed
a chapter on the temple gate—
fresh from the throne of God descended,
this reading he was all amazed
—vowing that words divine as these
must be of heaven and straightway ended
his ancient vain idolatries ;
and joined the Faith and met the hate
of Asad's Al Moallakât
with verse of fang as sharp as they,
and of the Prophet well deserved,
for nought of skill to sing or say
unto the Prophet of God was given
save when the very words of heaven
upon his mind like granite graven
for man's salvation he preserved.
Thus saved were a chosen few,
but as a stream the enmity
of the Koreish against him grew,
fed with a rain of miracle.
And they determined he must die,
and of each tribe one sword must be
steeped in his heart's blood equally.
But vain were plots and coward sword
against the Prophet of the Lord,
for from high heaven the warning came—
borne upon Gabriel's wings of flame.
' Arise, O Prophet, and depart
even to Medina, but beware
that you go secretly, go hid
in the grey friendliness of night,
lest with the life-blood of your heart
the hatred of the tribes should dare

the purpose of the Lord to blight.'
And as ordained the Prophet did
and found his victory in flight.
For on the eve of the very day
that the angel spake he found a way
out of his house, and Ali lay
upon the couch as the Prophet used,
and in the green cloak swathed amused
the murderers, gazing one by one
through a crevice in the wall upon
the lion of the Lord thus keeping
the vigil of the Lord by sleeping
tranquilly heroically
as the Prophet fled to victory.
And with the first of the coming dawn
lean and hungry the blades were drawn,
and standing by the Prophet's door :
' As cometh forth the Hashimite
our hate shall in our swords unite
striking together, none before
none after other, that on all
equally the blame may fall,
and of his kinsmen none shall dare
avenge this deed which all shall share.'
Thus spake they communing without,
and at the coming of the light
ravenous eyes and blades were bright.
Gently came Ali back from dreaming,
and as he turned on the couch about
the Prophet's mantle fell on the ground
since over was the night of seeming,
and he arose, and now for shame
the swords into the scabbards came,
and going forth the tribes he found
and as a lion lion-hearted
laughed as he told how had departed

the Prophet by the road of the Lord.
But of the Prophet, one for friend
fled from the city forth with him,
fled by the stars o'er the desert dim ;
'twas Abou Bekr, and first had end
their flight within the cave of Thaur.
And the spider came and weavèd o'er
the mouth of the cave his veil of gauze
and the doves laid their eggs before,
making the murderers to pause
and onward pass upon their way :
' For if the doves of heaven lay
their eggs, the spider weave his toil
before the cave, 'tis very sure
that the Prophet hideth not within.'
Thus spake the Koreish, thus did foil
spider and dove those men of sin,
but scarce could Abou Bekr endure
their voices echoing weird and thin
adown the galleries of the cave—
fearless for self his whispered grief
sought in a whisper for relief :
' Here are we twain and they a score,
if they enter in I cannot save
the Prophet of Islam.' ' We are twain,
answered the Prophet, ' but in vain
they seek us, for with us one more
these stony galleries hath trod,
one more, and He is Very God.'
Thus of the Flight and thus he came
unto Medina, and his name
waxed as the scimitar of the skies
from victory to victories,
till at the full the moon unfurled
floodeth with Islam all the world.
But of the battles I would tell,

of Bedr the first, by the desert well,
when the Prophet and the Ansar went
out from Medina in array
to meet the Meccan caravan
returning from the Syrian mart ;
but the men of Mecca did as they,
guarding their treasure and they sent
spies to spy out the winding way.
And these returned to glad the heart
of the general Abu Sofyan.
Safe is the precious merchandise
elusive from before the eyes
of the Medinans, but in vain
are Syrian stuffs and gold and gain
while couchant in the desert lies
the Man of deeds and prophecies.
On fared the men of Mecca, on
farèd the Prophet and his men,
and these to those were as five to ten,
and the Prophet camped as evening fell
at Bedr before the desert well.
All night was rain, but the sun outshone
with the first of the morn, ordained to blind
the eyes of the Meccans, and on the wind
rode Gabriel with his company,
to fight for Islam, and they stayed
the onslaught while the Prophet prayed.
Then from his hand the Prophet cast
stones toward the Meccans, and ' Advance,
cover with shame their countenance,'
and men and angels, sun and blast
fell on the Meccans presently.
The battle joined and a moment stayed
the fate of the world in the balance swayed
with the swaying of the linkèd strife ;
then turned and fled those Meccan men,

careless of all but each his life,
and the Ansar followed sword in hand
and smote them down in the wet deep sand.
Dead lay the Meccans on the plain,
yet on their faces written broad
lingered their hatred of the Lord
and of his Prophet, and he came
and called each dead man by his name :
‘ O worthless fellow citizen,
O sneerer that wouldst not believe,
that dravest the Prophet forth in vain
from his own city, but again
he cometh and doth not deceive
in battle nor in prophecies.
Hath not the Lord accomplished here
those words which by my mouth made clear
sounded unto thee but as lies ?’
The dead were silent, and men said,
‘ Why speaks the Prophet with the dead ?’
And the Prophet turned, and ‘ Know,’ said he,
‘ that these do hear as well as ye,
but cannot answer ;’ thus was done
the will of the Lord and the battle won.
And the Prophet to Medina came.
But of the battle of Ohod,
where since they harkened not to God
who by the voice of the Prophet spake
crying to them that they should not break
their line of battle, lured away,
I speak not, for their passing shame
obscured not more the Prophet’s fame
than a mist the sun on a springtide day.
The Prophet in Medina stayed
and round Medina walls he builded
and dug a trench as the Lord willed it,
whereat the Meccans were dismayed,

and unto Mecca went their way,
for first in Araby of all
around Medina was this wall,
and in the desert bold to die
men dared not scale those ramparts high,
since unto them it seemed that death
breathed from the walls a deadlier breath
than in the desert flying fair
upon the shaft that cleaves the air.
And with his hand the Prophet writ
unto the kings of all the earth
letters wherein he told the birth
of Islam, and the benefit
now upon earth and then in heaven
which to the faithful would be given.
First to the Emperor of Byzance
Heraclius, pale of countenance,
as now afoot he doth advance
victorious from Nineveh,
afoot adust athirst, and yet
that dusty heel of his is set
upon the Persian monarchy :
he is the Emperor of the East,
and yet he fares as fares the least
of all his men, nor mounts a beast
of all the thousands following him,
but as a simple palmer clad
he fareth, and his heart is glad
coming anigh Jerusalem ;
for lo ! the True Cross borne before,
wrenched by his arms from pagan hands,
unto the Holy Sepulchre
he beareth, and he stays to read
by the roadside the Prophet's screed.
He readeth and he brayeth loud,
and as the ass he understands,

for 'Who may the Prophet of Islam be
who dareth thus to write to me?'
but he laughs best who laughs the last,
and the white missive fluttering cast
by the wayside is for a shroud
to wind his Syrian empery.
And likewise unto Chosroës
Monarch of Persia writ the Prophet
as to Heraclius he had written ;
and Chosroës with like madness smitten
did rend the letter and morsels of it
flew from him on the wind as flew
his satrapies and provinces,
when Islam wrought the world anew,
Now to the Prophet's side there came
one with an all resplendent name,
Khalid, the Sword of God, who drave
at Ohod to a bloody grave
hosts of the faithful ere his sword
became the weapon of the Lord.
Thus fortified the Prophet turned
his mind to that for which he yearned
and with himself alone he musèd,
nor to Abou Bekr nor to Aïcha,
who best of friends and of spouses were,
the workings of his thought made clear.
For thus the Prophet ever usèd
when with celestial alchemy
his dreams he turned to destiny.
Behold where white for all men's eyes
Mecca the Holy City lies
and the old hills look down on her
for ever from their crevices.
This to recover, this regain
was the thought that teased the Prophet's brain.
For what could truces signed avail,

what rites fulfilled without the pale
of the most holy Kaaba ?
and though unarmed and few by few
he had sworn that he and his should do
such duties as religion bade,
then fare forth harmless on their way,
ever the Meccans said him nay.
Therefore his orders sent he forth
southward and westward east and north
and the numbers of the faithful grew
within Medina, but none knew
wherefore he bade them thus draw near ;
yet as the arrow in the bow
they waited on the Prophet's word,
ten thousand men of martial gear :
and now at last these faithful heard
the order how they had to go
and crowning all the mountain's crests
which toward the holy city face
gather the brushwood of each place
and wait thereon his new behests.
Thus fared they forth at morn, and night
saw upon every rocky height
an hundred men and every one
stood by the brushwood he had won.
Then came the word, ' Let each man light
his pile,' and opening one by one
a circle of ten thousand eyes
glare upon Mecca where she lies
within the hollow of her hills.
And from their sleep the Meccans waken
and with mighty dread their souls are shaken.
And Abou Sofyan, he who led
at Bedr their battle, he who fills
within the city the first place,
towards Medina they have sped,

if haply he the Prophet find
and gather at his hands some grace.
Forth in the wintry night he went
towards Medina, and the wind
blew here and there and the fiery hair
of the hill-tops streamed and shadows sent
across his path and jinns did ride
to flout him at his ass's side,
and in the air strange shapes did play,
and voices whispered in his ear :
' Lost, thy cause is lost this day,
and thou shalt plead and thou shalt pray
before the accursed Hashimite,
if haply he thy pleading hear,
if thou gain to him this wild night.
Thy father's ancient gods are we,
the gods that ruled in Araby,
and on the tempest lo we flee
before the accursed Hashimite.'
Onward he passed, when lo a man
upon a mule was at his side :
' If thou be Abou Sofyan,
and toward the Prophet thou art sent.
'Twere best together we should ride.'
He spake and the twain together fared,
and as the Prophet's camp they neared,
between the torches of his tent
they saw him and his voice they heard.
' Art thou convincèd now that one
God there is and beside him none ? '
And Abou Sofyan answering said :
' Were there another God than he,
then had he better holpen me.'
And the bats flew around his head
and in the glare of the torches' light
the eyes of the Prophet gleamed bright.

‘Dost thou acknowledge now that I
am the Prophet sent by God on high?’

‘Pardon, O Hashimite, if doubt
yet dwelleth in me—will not out.’

Thereat his fellow-wayfarer
who stood beside him whispered, ‘Swear
or in an instant thou shalt die.’

And Abou Sofyan gazed once more
upon the Prophet’s blazing eye
and his eyes fell and so he swore :

‘No other God there is but God
and his Prophet he is Mohammad.’

‘Then get thee back by the pathway trod
and to the Meccans speak, declare
that none of evil aught need fear
who in thy house inclosèd are,
or in the holy Kaaba.’

Thus spake the Prophet and again
sped Abou Sofyan o’er the plain
and the Prophet’s word delivered
unto the Meccans, and most sought
safety within his spacious court,
or in the holy Kaaba.

And the sun upon the earth had risen
when moving in fourfold division
the army of the Prophet came
unto the gates of the Holy City,
and peacefully they entered in,
for the Prophet’s word to all was ‘Pity’—
though in the hearts of most that name
but little from their hate could win
and least from Khalid’s Bedouin
who as the racing coursers strain
strained to come at them—not in vain.
For at the turning of a street
as these fare forward fiery eyed,

lo ! flights of arrows rattling greet
their coming and they fall like hail
about their heads, about their feet,
and gazing upward they espy
within a circle fortified
armed with their hate their enemy.
Now not the Prophet's words avail,
for Pity's self the arrows pierce
and with their friends she is a-dying,
and as a single arrow flying
so on these Meccans fly the fierce
sons of the desert and from the hill
whereon he stood the Prophet saw
fall of the Meccans many a score.
And wrath the Prophet's heart did fill
seeing his order disobeyed ;
but when from Khalid's lips he knew
how first the Meccan arrows flew
melted his anger, and he said :
' Ever the Lord ordaineth best.'
Then from the hill-top went he down,
the Prophet to the holy town.
Home to her home had Islam come
as the eagle cometh to her nest,
and north and south and east and west,
gazing o'er Araby she saw
none but obeyed her equal law.
And seven times beneath the dome
touched the Prophet with his staff that stone
of heavenly things on earth alone,
and seven times he walked around
the circle of the temple's ground ;
then turning to his men he said :
' Hurl me the heathen idols down.'
He spake and as he spake they did.
And his promise he did not disown,

for all are pardoned, all may go
fearless and scathless to and fro
within without the holy town,
save of the slanderers only one,
a woman vile of liltng tongue
who with her rhyme the Prophet stung
and as a gadfly now he brushes
from his ear and 'neath his heel he crushes,
and of the plotters three must die,
ripe-rotten, steeped in infamy
that their corruption rose on high.
Thus was the will of the Lord made good
and as a falconer draws the hood
back from the yellow piercing eyes
of the peregrine upon his wrist
and casting loose, 'Fly free,' he cries ;
so cried the Prophet as he drew
the hood from Islam and he flew
the world for quarry never missed.
Young, ah ! young is the falcon bright
wheeling around in the clouds of white,
but old the falconer ere his time
and furrowed deep the brow sublime,
with the furrows that each new ploughshare
leaves in the driver's brow of care,
and as more rich and as more rare
(and what more true, more rich, more rare
than Islam ?)
so deeper sunk are the furrows there.
And the last pilgrimage he made
and unto Allah thus he prayed :
'Allah, behold my message given,
my task accomplished : ' and his hair
black once as a raven's plume was white,
his body bent and everywhere
the marks he bare of the great fight

between the powers of earth and of heaven.
And as the summer heats again
beat merciless the arid plain,
so surged the fever to his brain
and sleep he sought but sought in vain.
Therefore upon a night of June
the Prophet from his couch arose,
and treading softly under the moon
he sought the place where his friends repose
until the coming of the Lord.
And in the silent cemetery
he prayed and then he spake : ' O ye
who wait Him here and have seen with me
the first fulfilment of His word,
lie still and in your graves rejoice,
for ye have made the wiser choice
than those who linger after ye.'
And he returned him home and said :
' To choose between the life on earth
and the presence of Very God in heaven
unto the Prophet hath been given,
and the presence of God hath the Prophet chosen.'
And the Prophet lay upon his bed
and the soul of Araby was shed
in tenderness about his bed.
And gold and silver and all of worth
in alms unto the poor he gave,
' For 'twere unfit that the Prophet hold
within his hand one piece of gold,
when before God he stands on high.'
But with the dawn his malady
had much abated and he willed
once more the temple entering
once more the people to rejoice.
And on that day was the temple filled
with rich and poor, and they heard the voice
of Abou Bekr the Prophet's friend.

And none did doubt but that now the end
was come of the Prophet's prophesying,
yea, all believed that now he lay
upon his couch and was adying.
And for the Prophet all did pray,
and Abou Bekr in the pulpit stood
speaking such words as most seemed good.
Sudden a pause and 'It is he,
the Prophet cometh,' and as a stream
before the barge of a king divided,
so must that crowd of the faithful be
as moving slow majestically
the Prophet through the Faithful came,
on the arm of a friend supported, guided,
trembled his body but how bright
is now upon his face the light
of joy for the great life's work well done,
of joy for the rest from work well won
And now the pulpit steps he seeks,
and for the last time lo ! he speaks
unto the faithful, and his word
rings true and clear that all may hear
within the temple, nay, those heard
even who stood without but near.
'By Allah ! none can say me nay
for any deed of my life to-day :
nought have I sanctioned here below
but Allah willed that it should be so.
Nought have I held on earth forbidden
but as Allah in the book hath written.'
Then with Osâma did he speak
who should lead the faithful against the Greek.
'Forth with thy army fare,' said he,
'and the blessing of God abide with thee.'
Thus spake the Prophet and again
his couch he sought, and Aïcha laid

upon his bosom her fair head,
 and the last pangs of mortal pain
 quivered through him, and 'Allah ! aid
 thy Prophet in his agony,
 and Gabriel be thou near to me.
 Allah ! thy pardon grant to me,
 unite me with my friends on high !
 Eternity in Paradise !'
 Thus in an infinite ultimate sigh
 ended the prophet of Araby
 and all the world, and heavy lies
 upon Aïcha's bosom his head,
 and closèd are those holy eyes
 which in the book of God have read.
 The Prophet not his work is dead—
 but still Aïcha dreams he sleeps,
 and as she watches gently weeps.
 Dead is the Prophet, but the word
 which from the angel of God he heard
 abideth with us in the Book,
 where, an ye will it, we shall look,
 as thou, O John Mansour, didst take
 from the Bible instances that make
 thy tale of Barlaam fair and bright,
 and thou, O man of India, brought
 the tribute of thy Buddha's thought
 to be to us for great delight ;
 so, an ye will it, I display
 such of our jewels carelessly
 as might a merchant plunging deep
 his hand within his precious heap,
 and drawing forth at random some
 of the many jewels there, secure
 that which of all may chance to come
 into his hand are perfect, pure,
 of equal orient with the rest

slipped by his fingers in their quest.
Allah! there is no God but he,
he is himself alone, he liveth,
he sleepeth not nor slumbereth;
his are the heaven and the earth.
All that hath been that knoweth he,
he knoweth all that is to be,
and none shall aught of these things know,
save in so far as he willeth so.
Over the earth and the heaven his throne
extendeth and his power is shown
upholding earth, upholding heaven,
nor are they unto him for burden.
And Al Koran he hath sent down
confirming what before was known.
And Adam of black clay he made
and to the angels of heaven said:
'Worship ye Adam whom I made.'
And all the angels worshipped Adam,
all save the chiefest angel Eblis.
And the Lord said: 'What reason is
thou fallst not down nor worshippingst
this Adam whom of clay I made?'
And Eblis answered God: 'I am
more excellent than Adam is,
since me of subtle fire thou madest,
him but of clay.' 'Then get thee down
from Paradise, for lo, thy pride
shall not in Paradise abide,'
said the Lord, and Eblis gat him down,
and as he went he asked for grace
until the judgment.
And the Lord granted for that space
respite to Eblis, but Eblis cried:
'Since by Thy will I am depravèd
verily now will I lie in wait

for man in every pathway strait,
and from the left hand and the right
and by the day and by the night
will I come on him that his sins
may make it that he ne'er be saved.'
'Despised and driven away go hence
and for thy followers verily
hell will I fill with them and thee,'
said the Lord, and Eblis gat him thence
and unto Adam's side he wins
standing with Eva by the tree.
And how he tempted and how they fell
by Mansour hath been spoken well
within the telling of his tale
of Barlaam and of Joasaph,
for much of truth their history hath,
though of the whole the Christians fail.
But what of Adam fallen to earth?
Of heavenly things he felt the dearth,
and to the Lord in heaven he cried :
'O Lord, no longer now I hear
the angel's voice as while standing near
I heard it at thy holy side.'
And the Lord answered : 'Many days
shall pass before my angel's praise
thou hearest in heaven but thou shalt raise
upon the earth a temple fair
such as in heaven about my throne
thou hast seen the angels' hands prepare.'
Thus spake the Lord and Adam came
nigh unto Mecca and alone
he sought the first of the building stone,
but sought in vain until the same
from mountains five the angels brought
in massy blocks which Adam wrought ;
And from Paradise a tent came down
of hyacinth red wherein a white

hyacinth was for his delight.
This is that stone of high renown
white once but now as black as the night
which in the temple on the right
standeth, and wherefore thus from white
the stone was changed, by woman's touch
say some or by the sins of man
say others, but we know thus much,
that when the waters first began
to whelm the world the angels hid
in the Mount Kobaïs as Allah bid
the stone, but the temple and the tent
drawn up returned whence these were sent.
And the place of the temple place of pain
once was to Hagar when in vain
water she sought for Ishmael,
and to the summit of Safa clomb
and to the summit of Merwā,
but far and near and near and far
desolate sands and desert are.
And coming back she read his doom
on Ishmael's face and as they tell
ran back again and to and fro
between the summits must she go,
a mother mad with mother's woe,
thus seeking water helplessly
for the child who on the desert sand
stretches to heaven a tiny hand.
And when to Ishmael cometh she
distracted : bubbling by his side
behold the water that she sought
from the depths of the earth by Allah brought.
And kneeling down she builded round
the sand of the desert for a bound
unto the water and she caught
the first drops of the springing well,
Hagar red-eyed for Ishmael,

and gave them unto Ishmael,
girl-mother in the desert lone
whose love doth for her sin atone.
Thus flowed the first of the well Zamzam.
And the years passed by and to his son,
to Ishmael came Abraham,
and the command of the Lord declared—
how that where stood that heavenly one
an earthly temple be prepared.
And as he spake so was begun
their labour and as Abraham builded
so Ishmael brought the stone, until
to the corner of the temple they
building and bearing made their way.
Then Abraham said: 'Go seek a stone
more fit than than these this place to fill,'
and Ishmael sought as Abraham willed it.
But the angel of the Lord alone
knew where it lay, that fitting stone.
And to the Mount Kobaïs he
wingèd his way and presently
returning, in his hand he bore
the hyacinth black that white before
was once for joy to Adam's eyes.
And Abraham placed it corner-wise
that to the faithful it should be
visible eternally.
And Abraham wrought and now indeed
the temple rose and reached more high
than Abraham's stature and his need
met Ishmael who carried nigh
to his father's feet a vasty stone,
and Abraham stood him thereupon
and Abraham wrought until was done
the temple as the Lord commanded.
Now Gabriel came and seven times led

father and son the temple round
and as they went, the corners four
touched they which are the temple's bound,
and once they bowed them and once more
ere by the vasty stone they prayed
whereon stood Abraham as he wrought.
And Gabriel tarried and he taught
how between Safa and Merwa
'tis fitting that the faithful run
seven times as seven times ran Hagar
in anguish for her infant son.
And Ishmael was the first to run,
and as he ran he seemed to hear
her gentle voice within his ear
crying 'Ishmael, my Ishmael ;'
and when he stayed there came a tear
into his eye and he seemed to see
his mother's face, but he saw not clear,
his mother's smile, but he saw not well,
for from the depths of memory
rose to his eyes full many a tear.
Next to the valley of Mina they
followed the angel Gabriel,
and Eblis met them in the way.
Said Gabriel : ' Stones to throw thou hast,'
and seven small stones did Abraham cast
and Eblis vanished, but again
in the valley's midst was manifest
and seven small stones did Abraham cast,
and Eblis vanished but was plain
at the end of the valley and again
seven times the stones did Abraham cast
and Eblis vanished at the last.
Then to Arafa and Mozdalifa
went Abraham and Ishmael,
and Gabriel taught what duties are

at Arafa and Mozdalifa.

When all these things were markèd well
of Abraham and of Ishmael,
then was the mission of Gabriel ended
and God to Abraham spake and said :
'Go forth and all mankind engage
to make the yearly pilgrimage
unto these same the holy places
and to the holy Kaaba.'

But Abraham answered : 'Lord thy praises
fain would I tell both near and far,
and fain would all mankind engage
to make each year the pilgrimage,
but Lord my voice would nowise reach
unto the ears of all and of each.'

Answered the Lord : 'Thou hast to speak
as I command, and I will see
that all mankind give heed to thee.'

Then the great stone did Abraham seek
and when he stood thereon more high
it rose than any mountains are.

And Abraham cried : 'O men come nigh
to the ancient house,' and near and far
echoed his voice and north and south
and east and west he turned, and his mouth
was as a cavern opened wide
as unto all mankind he cried ;
and from all lands men answered : 'Yea,
we come, O God, and we obey.'

And Abraham having spoken ended
and again to earth the stone descended.

But of the prophets of old to tell
who followed Abraham fain would I
of Moses speak as on Sinai
converse he held with Very God,
of the burning bush and of the rod,

save that time lacks and lacks the spell
of Mansour's speech, for many an one
of these our prophets also dwell
within the Christian's holy pages—
Noah and Lot and Solomon,
Aïsa, David, but the son
of David and how first his name,
unto the ears of Balkis came
behold my memory engages,
and if you will I shall display
his carpet green for you this day.”
He ceased, and the Syrians every one
cried : “ Zobeir speaks of Solomon.”
“ Solomon reigned when David died
and horses were for Solomon's pride,
and on a day they brought before
the throne of Solomon a score
of horses fairest, fleetest, best,
which ever the desert sand had pressed ;
and Solomon gazèd with delight
upon these horses all the day,
he gazed until the set of the sun,
he gazed until the birth of night ;
and gazing he forgot to pray,
and the service of God he had not done.
Too late remembering grieved he deep,
and sware an oath that he would not keep
one of the horses which had trod
under their hoofs his fear of God.
Therefore he slew them with his hand.
But when the Lord his piety knew,
said he : ‘ King Solomon shall not rue
his deed of piety when he slew
these horses ; let the carpet stand
in place of horses for Solomon ;
and O ye winds, when he standeth on

this carpet green ye are to blow
whithersoever he wills to go.'
And on his left the Genii stood
and his army stood upon the right
and Solomon went where seemed him good,
and above his head in heaven flew
the birds for canopy and he knew
the speech of the birds, and on a day
Solomon counted the birds that flew
over his carpet in array.
'And whither is the lapwing flown?'
said Solomon, 'for verily
if now she tarry on her way
chastisèd shall the lapwing be.'
And soon before King Solomon's throne
stood the lapwing, and : 'O King,' said he,
'I have viewed a country yet unseen
by Solomon, I have viewed a queen
Balkis yclept and very fair
she is and yellow is her hair,
and the land is Saba and the sun
they worship who have dwelling there.'
And Solomon wrote with his hand a screed
and to the lapwing Solomon said :
'If what thou sayest be truth indeed
fly with this word and let it fall
at Balkis' feet,' and Balkis read
the missive and : 'Ah me !' she cried,
'what fate for us doth the missive hide?'
And her nobles said : 'O queen for you
it is to know what you will do.'
And they did nought and Solomon waited
vainly an answer till a genius
said : 'If thou wilt it, Solomon,
Balkis the queen upon her throne
will I bring to thee,' and even thus

he did and with fair Balkis freighted
sitting upon her ivory throne
flew the genius back to Solomon.
And by her hand did Solomon lead
Balkis to view his palaces
and as they went she cried : ' Indeed
these be great waters : ' when the glasses
wherewith the palace floor was laid
timorously her feet did tread.
And over the glasses, on and on,
did Balkis walk with Solomon
and all the wealth of the world she saw
spread out her curious eyes before.
And Balkis said : ' Until this hour
have I dealt unjustly with my soul,
but now to God with Solomon
fain would I body and soul outpour,
fain would I render up control
of all my lands and rest upon
the wisdom of King Solomon.'
Thus of the Queen of Saba spake
the Prophet and as his custom was,
nought from his knowledge did he take,
but on the word of God relied
and when that ceased remained tongue-tied ;
therefore the utmost value has
each word, each dot of the holy book,
wherein if one for poesy look
by Allah he shall be deceived,
but if for the word of God and how
with Abraham he shall be received
among the blessed, living now
according to the will of the Lord,
reading he findeth his reward.
But how the sleepers seven hid
within the cave at Ephesus

and how Al Rakhim with them slid
into the cave somniferous,
this tale the Prophet tells to us
in simple words as Allah bid.
The companions of the cave were seven
and when the emperor Decius
ragèd against the will of heaven
their hearts with constancy were strong
and each to the other said : ' Too long
have we endured within our ear
these words of blasphemy to hear ;
our God is the Lord of earth and of heaven
to him alone shall our praise be given.
Therefore from Ephesus let us go
unto the cave whereof we know
and maybe that the Lord will make
that we perish not for his dear sake,
but if he will, far better thus
to die than to live in Ephesus.'
And as together journeyed they
met them Al Rakhim by the way :
' And dear unto God in heaven are ye
and dear upon earth ye are to me,'
said the dog Al Rakhim, ' and while ye sleep
lo I will turn ye and will keep
watch that no evil come to ye.'
And in the cave they lay and slept,
and watch by them Al Rakhim kept ;
and from their sleep they waked and one
asked of another : ' Hath a day
passed since we came within the cave ?'
' A day perchance and the night begun,'
answered that other, ' but how old
thou seemst in face, this cave how cold,
and dark as 'twere a very grave ;'
and the seven sleepers hungerèd

and to one of them those others said :
' Go seek the town and buy us bread ;'
so he went forth and in his hand
he bare a coin where curled and grand
stamped was the head of Decius ;
and he came unto Ephesus
and to the breadseller went he
and gave the coin, but presently
the breadseller cried, ' Here cometh one
with the coin of an emperor bygone ;
surely a treasure under the ground
this antique hoary man hath found.'
And to the governor he brought
that sleeper stepped from out his dream,
and strange that sleeper's speech did seem
and strange his tale of how he sought
but yesterday the cave and how
his brethren waited even now
to eat the bread, and the governor
went with the sleeper and he saw
those other sleepers standing there
by the mossy cave with mossy hair
and things of dream were over them
and dim and faint their answers came,
as from a voyager when the shore
dwindles and dwindles evermore,
and very soon those sleepers seven
turned on their sides and soon they slept
and watch by them Al Rakhim kept
(for ever faithfully watched he)
and the sleepers passed from earth to heaven
and with them must Al Rakhim be
who watched so long, so faithfully."
Thus of the sleepers told Zobeir
and how they won to Paradise,
and when he ceased he saw the eyes

of all the many gathered there
fixèd upon him and one cried :

“ Since of the faiths of Christ and of Ind
those twain your guests have told and tried
our faith to wean, let us now hear
the truth and thus again come clear
if harkening to them we have sinned ;
tell us of heaven and what reward
unto the faithful grants the Lord.”

“ To gather the pearls of prophecy up
and pour them forth as from a cup
drops of the red the yellow wine,
not spilling one, were gift divine,”
answered Zobeir, “ but if ye will
O ye my guests, and ye who fill
these palmy stretches of my court
lo will I bring my best of thought,
and from the bird of memory
pluck yet a waving plume for ye.”

And the man of Ind said, “ Sir, your speech
is as your greeting fair and free
and lo I will abide with ye
until the eve and watch ye pleach
the strands of Islam basketwise
to hold the jewels of your faith.”

“ And I,” said John, “ will tarry here
while the palmy shadows follow the sun
harkening to what of truth there lies
in Al Koran—and what of lies—
and pierce the falsehoods without fear
as 'twixt the palm leaves strikes the sun.”

“ Friend,” said Zobeir, “ so thou wilt stay
and rest thee here, lo thou shalt say
what best shall please thee, for Islam needs
no buttresses of men nor deeds
to help her stand who hath withstood

the world in arms in her childhood,
and now to fullest stature grown
easier friends than foes doth own.¹
Then turned Zobeir and : " They be four
our angel chiefs and Gabriel more
than the three others honoured is,
since unto men the messages
he beareth from the Lord on high,
Gabriel giver of souls, more nigh
to the love of God than any other,
and Azrael his darker brother,
giver of death and Israfil
who shall sound the trump on the judgment day,
and Michael friend of the Jews doth fill
the plate with food, but of Azazil,
now Eblis hight for his despair,
compact as they of fire and air,
who for man waiteth in the way,
of him I have told and how he fell.
Now of the genii to tell,
these be of fire as the angels are,
but yet less subtle, for they love
and eat and drink and taste of death—
lesser than angels nor above
the race of man yet elder far,
long before Adam first drew breath
these dwelt on the earth and Solomon
ever the name of their ruler was.
But when corruption came upon
this race of the jinns, then Azazil
(ere Adam lived and wrought him ill)
drave them unto the ends of the earth,
yet some remaining, Tamuraph
battled with these and fabulous

¹ By profession of Islam the capitation tax levied on non-Mo-
hammedans was avoided.

into the fabled mountain Kaf
they fled and as the legends tell,
if aught for us have legends worth,
yet in these fabled hills they dwell—
peris the fairies floating fair
mounted on dragons high in air,
and giants and the race Tacwin,
the fates, and others of their kin ;
for manifold as the race of man,
so is the race of genii many ;
and more than stands in Al Koran
of the jinns, that need not credit any,
but who hath travelled the desert lone,
hath heard the voice behind the stone,
met the Bedouin upon the steed
black as himself may smile indeed
at the tales of the genii by day,
but alone at night that man will pray,
nor think to smile upon his way.
And verily the jinns shall stand
before the Lord at his left hand,
and among them the true believers
(who of the Prophet were receivers)
these shall be saved and the others damned
on the judgment day. But I would tell
of what to the body and soul of men
must come to pass in the time of the grave ;
I tell it though ye know it well,
that John Mansour may hear again
of the truth of Islam and the man
of India yet perchance may save
his body from the iron maces
of Monker and of Nakir wielded
upon the bodies and the faces
of the sinners as they sit upright
within their graves in woful plight,

and for his soul that he may shield it
 from the dungeon 'neath the rock Sajin,
 whither by evil angels borne
 it must wait the trump of the judgment morn
 ere like a truant creeping in—
 body and soul again together
 body and soul be damned for ever.”
 Smiled Mansour, and : “Tell me, pray,
 O Zobeir, of the judgment day
 and the end of the world, when it shall be.”
 Answered Zobeir : “No man can say
 when it shall be, the judgment day,
 but ere its coming men shall see
 the greater and the lesser signs ;
 whereof the first, the sun shall rise
 in the west and backward over the skies
 shall pass on his way, and the beast shall walk
 upon the earth and mark with lines
 the face of faithful and infidel—
 and Arabic the beast shall talk ”
 (loud laughed Mansour), “and the beast shall teach
 the vanity of every creed
 save only Islam. And Dajjel
 shall come upon earth, and his power shall reach
 from Ispahan unto Medina,
 and he is Antichrist indeed,
 but the Jews shall hold him for Redeemer.
 And Aïsa at the gate of Lod
 shall meet and slay the Antichrist.
 Yea verily shall the Periclyte,
 who is the Christ sent down from God,
 upon the great white tower alight
 east of Damascus ; he shall fight
 and he shall slay the Antichrist.”
 “Pray tell me, Zobeir,” said Mansour,
 “of whom you speak : if your Aïsa

be Jesus Christ the Lord, I fear
 you are in error, for 'tis sure
 that never upon Damascus tower,
 though from to-day till the judgment hour
 it stand, will Jesus Christ descend ;
 nay, when He cometh it shall be
 with the Father and the Holy Ghost,
 equal, eternal, One in Three,
 and with the whole of the heavenly host.”
 Answered Zobeir : “ Nay, Christ is the same
 with ye and with us yet not the same ;
 for both he is word and spirit of God,
 born without man of the Virgin Mary
 by the virtue of the Holy Ghost.
 But vain for us is the Jewish boast
 that the steps of Christ have Calvary trod,
 for a mere shadow light and airy
 those crucified : not tasting death
 unto high Heaven did the true Christ pass,
 and when the Almighty asked him whether
 the Son of God he claimed to be :
 ‘ Allah ! forbend,’ he answereth,
 ‘ that such a claim I should make ever ;
 thou knowest that I said it not,
 and ever thy trusty servant was—
 this lie have evil men begot
 who bear thy servant enmity.’
 Thus spake the Christ and swept away
 with a word what evil men did say,
 but why do the Christians aye adore
 with God in heaven two godheads more ?”
 Answered Mansour : “ Because we see
 in the words of the prophets read by ye
 and in our Scriptures written clear
 that the Christians’ God is One in Three—
 Three Gods in One, the Trinity.

And, Zobeir, since yourself have said
that God hath a spirit and hath a word,
declare that all the world may hear—
Be these created or uncreated?"

"What if I answer : uncreate?"
said Zobeir. "Then you have averred
the Christian faith, for whatever be
uncreate is God and Christ is the Word,
the Ghost the Spirit—God in Three,"
triumphed Mansour. "But wait, but wait,"
cried Zobeir ; "what if I abate
my negative and say : created?"

"Then," said Mansour, "a time hath been
when without spirit, without word,
imperfect, mutilate was the Lord."

"Ha!" quoth Zobeir, "but Christ, I ween,
though the word Incarnate, yet was seen
walking on earth and eating, sleeping
drinking and drawing mortal breath,
the dull days of a mortal keeping,
died at the last a shameful death
upon the Cross." Mansour replied :

"In the measure of his mortality
taken from Mary, Jesus died
upon the Cross of infamy ;
but for his immortality,
the eternal word of God was he,
nor could he slumber, nor could die."

Said Zobeir : "Therefore ye adore
the Christ, but with him somewhat more,
the Cross of wood ; now answer me,
if this be not idolatry?"

Loud laughed Mansour and : "What of the stone
within your Kaaba, kissed away
through ages of idolatry?"
he cried. "With us the Cross is shewn

unto the faithful for a sign,
for memory of a deed divine."

"Divine, divine, you cry," replies
Zobeir, and flames are in his eyes,
"and is our stone that fell from heaven,
that saw Hagar to Abraham given,
whereunto Abraham's camel bound,
watched Isaac for a sacrifice,
upraise to heaven his prayerful eyes,
and in the bush the ram was found,
is not our heavenly stone divine?"

"His camel! and the Scriptures tell
but of his ass, and the Kaaba stands
where on the burning rocks and sands
nor bush nor any plant can twine
tendrils nor boughs wherefrom to cleave
wood for the burning sacrifice.

Verily Islam's doctors weave
from woof of truth a web of lies,"
answered Mansour, and now his eyes
flamed, and their flames must meet and mingle
with Zobeir's, for the mind of each
unto the faith of each was single,
nor though they strove for aye could reach
beyond the outer core of speech,
beyond the form, behind the veils
where love, not argument, prevails,
yet were these twain true friends indeed,
for a friend is a friend, a creed a creed.

"Therefore," said Zobeir, smoothing down
upon his brow the stormy frown
and of the lightnings of his eyes
stopping the fiery passages
with hand drawn gently over his brow:
"Mansour, ye have spoken and I have spoken,
perchance 'twere best had neither broken

the brittle lance of words at war ;
but as my friend I prithee now,
cease and in silence let me draw,
as the man of Ind and you before,
the picture of our Islam's creed.
And if I flash and though I flame,
remember that you flashed the same
and I kept silence." With a bow
answered Mansour, and all gave heed
unto Zobeir as again he spake
of the end of the world, as he told indeed,
when first Mansour his discourse brake.
" And the next sign will be the war
waged with the Jews, and the very trees
shall reveal the hiding-place of these,
unto the faithful cry : Explore
my branches in their green recesses,
for hid within an Hebrew presses
his skin against my coat of wood ;
yea, verily every tree and stone
shall speak as a true believer should
saving the tree garkhad alone,
which shall keep silence or amuse
the faithful, being the tree of the Jews.
And the whole earth a smoke shall fill,
and thrice shall the moon eclipsed be,
and the ancient gods of Araby
for a little space shall come again,
and the Euphrates back shall roll
his waves in Mesopotamy
and a vast heap of gold reveal,
ruin of many, body and soul ;
and razèd level with the plain
shall be the Kaaba and fires
shall rage in the Hejjaz, and a man
of the descendants of Kahtan

shall drive men onward with his stave,
while through the world a wind suspires
blowing from Syria Damascene,
and the souls of the faithful and Al Koran
their passage out of the world shall have
its chilly scented wings between,
and in primeval ignorance furled
an hundred years shall lie the world.
These of the greater signs are some,
but none can say when it will come
the blast of consternation,
first of the blasts on the trumpets blown ;
the heavens shall melt, the stars fall down,
the angels who in their hands uphold
the stars in heaven too must die ;
and flat on the plain will the mountains lie,
and women who suckle babes shall fly,
nor think to save them, and much more
than now unto ye can be told ;
and the second blast will sound and all
creatures in earth and heaven before
this blast shall perish, saving those
toward whom Allah's pity goes ;
and this in an instant shall befall,
and of all living things to die
the angel of death shall be the last.
And in forty years will sound the blast
of resurrection and Israfil
shall blow this blast and Gabriel
and Michael too shall stand him nigh
on the rock of the temple, for restored
they will be to life by the will of the Lord.
And like a flock of swarming bees
men's souls shall gather around these
filling the space between earth and heaven,
until to each his body given

they will come before the judgment seat,
and of Adam first will Allah ask :

‘ For mankind wilt thou intercede ? ’

Adam shall say : ‘ For such a task
O Lord thy servant is unmeet,
and if thou sparest my soul indeed
no more do I crave ; ’ and Noah thus
shall speak and Abraham and Jesus
who is Aïsa unto us.

‘ Then shall the Lord declare and say :
here on the last the Judgment Day,
behold, of all the prophets none
dareth confront the judgment throne,
and for these sinners intercede. ’

Then shall a voice cry out : ‘ Yea, one
for these the sinners dareth plead ; ’
and as the star of morn arisen
upon the awful void of heaven
shall stand one figure forth alone
fearless before the Judgment Throne,
and the hearts of the faithful shall be glad
seeing the Prophet Mohammad.

Then shall the Lord demand of each,
of his days how spent, of his wealth how won,
of his body to what labour given,
of his knowledge whereto that did reach
and therewithal what each hath done.

And then shall every man begin
on others to lay his share of sin,
and when awhile he thus hath striven
unto the Lord his soul shall cry :

‘ O Lord, my Lord, withouten hand
thou madest me, withouten foot,
withouten ear, withouten eye,
withouten mind to understand,
until within the body shut,

lo I must wander to and fro
wherever the body willed to go,
lo I must sin, though innocent,
within the hateful body pent ;
therefore I pray deliver me,
but the body burn eternally.'

And the body unto the Lord will say :

' O Lord, like any stock of wood
thou madest me, for by no way
could my hand hold, nor ever could
my foot walk, nor mine eye could see,
nor my tongue speak, until this soul
like a ray of light within me stole.

Therefore I pray thee punish soul
for ever, but deliver me.'

But the Lord this parable will propound
unto the pair as they tremble there
again in hateful company bound.

' Once a fair garden had a King
where the fruit was ripe, and gardeners twain
set the King to guard the fruit ; and one
being blind could not see anything,
and the other lame must gaze in vain
where in the shining of the sun
apple and quince and pear he saw.

Therefore to Blind Man Lame Man said :

" Upon thy shoulders if I climb
right easily I shall withdraw
the fruit from the bough above my head,
and half for thee and half for me
shall be for shares : " and thus they did.
But the King came and marked the crime.
And Blind Man cried : " No eyes had I : "
and Lame : " No feet to reach so high."
But the King bade to set again
the lame on the blind and an equal pain

unto those sinners did award
that King, as even I the Lord
upon thee Body and thee Soul
that are twin halves of an evil whole.'
But ere men fare to heaven or hell
with the balance cometh Gabriel
to weigh their evil and their good,
and if Gabriel saith : ' O Lord the scale
by an ant's weight leaneth for the good,'
then shall the Lord let doubled be
the good to him, but if it should
lean to the side of the evil, then
an equal weight of the sins of those
injured by him who have not taken
vengeance for his misfeasancy
into the balance Gabriel throws,
and doubly damned with other's sins
he misseth Heaven and Hell begins.
But when the Lord hath sentence given
must the companions of hell and of heaven
together pass by the bridge that lies
o'er the midst of hell and a scimitar's edge
is not more keen than the bridge's ledge ;
and as the wind or the lightning flies
shall the Prophet and the blessed glide
over the bridge to Paradise :
but for the damnèd, hooks and briars
the tenuous pathway shall beset
and though he fare a little yet
soon must he slip, soon will he slide
over the bridge to hellish fires.
And the name of the bridge is Al Sirat,
and the first of the hells is under that,
Jehennam hight, where those must lie
who did confess one only God,
but in the path of evil trod.

Here shall infernal torments try
their souls and bodies, but in the end
these shall be pardoned, these shall blend
with the blessed in Paradise, for never
shall a believer burn for ever.

Ladha, Al Hotama, Al Säir,
Sakar, Al Jahim are for hell
to Jew and Christian, Sabian, Magian,
Idolator, one above the other
in order placed, where each must dwell ;
and guardian angels watch them there
and to these angels do they pray
that death may end their agony
for ever, and Al Hawiyat

is the last and lowest hell of hell
where in a filthy smoke and smother
is the hypocrite who with the faithful sat
making pretence to be his brother,
or with the faithful of some other
faith that was ruinous indeed
unto its faithful, yet a creed.

But of Al Araf the wall to tell
built between Paradise and hell ;
here dwell those youths that perished
in battle, facing ruddy death,
heroically for the faith

yet warring thus they disobeyed
their parents' will, and to the eyes
of the blessed gazing upon these
they are in hell, but to the lost
seemeth Al Araf Paradise.

And the wall Al Araf shall be crossed
by the blessed who thereon shall sit
converse to hold with those that freeze
or burn beneath, for 'tis a joy
to look upon hell and those within it

whom fire and frost and fiends annoy.
'And, oh for a draught of Salsabil!
I prithee Abraham that thou spill
one drop from the cup within thy hand,'
shall cry one burning, 'think that we
oft as we passed o'er the desert sand
alighted and I gave thee drink
from the cup that carven curiously
brimmed with well-water to the brink.'
But to his friend that was on a day
Abraham shall speak and say :
'Yea, verily oft from thy carven cup,
O friend that was have I taken sup
as o'er the desert pleasantly
I farèd in thy company,
but now behold, thy evil doing
once upon earth hath brought thee ruin,
and by the thirst of hell thou must
now be tormented as is just.
But lo ! my friend of the days that were,
though black thy face and branded there
I see the signet of despair,
grieve an thou wilt, yet this remember :
that though thou burnst in mind and member
and every moment feelst as though
thou didest hold the sum of woe
within thy body rent and torn,
within thy brain which is newborn
by a perpetual miracle
to taste anew the pains of hell,
yet since for all thy wickedness
Islam thou truly didst confess,
within a million million year
from off thy face the flames shall clear
and on the wings of Gabriel
shalt thou be lifted out of hell,

and I upon this wall shall stand
and take and lead thee by the hand—
by the ways of Paradise that I know
unto the place where the rivers flow
Al Cawthar and the River of Life,
and though we meet those by the way
who shall shake the head and laugh and say :
Behold where Abraham goeth now
with one that branded on his brow
beareth the word “ Infernal ” graved,
soon in those milky waters lavèd,
whiter than any pearl shalst thou
rejoice with me that thou art savèd,
and be my friend in Paradise.
And unto thee in every wise
shall be as to the lesser blessed.
For high in the topmost heaven rest
the prophets and next below repose
doctors and teachers and all know
prophets above, martyrs below,
and ’neath the martyrs simply those
who having lived a godly life
have here felicity, rest from strife.
Yea, in the garden Al Ferdaws
shalt thou abide and at thy side
smiling beneath thin veils of gauze
shall the Hur Al Oyûn be to thee
for true celestial company,—
damsels of Paradise dark of eye,
not made of clay not made to die,
but all of musk, divine immortal,
dwelling behind the pearly portal
of the pavilion which alone
to thee of all mankind is known.
And as an hundred men, so thou
shalt be to them, and in age as now

youthful eternally and again
thou shalt clasp to thy heart thy wives, for they
have souls immortal as have men,
and in a place apart are gay
with all becoming modesty,
waiting their lord,—or peradventure
such pains as plague thee now endure.’
Thus as he speaks shall sudden rise
flames like vast towers from below
and sparks like camels red shall throw
these flames, and hidden from his eyes
shall be his friend a little space,
but when again he shall see his face
shall Abraham speak, shall Abraham cry :
‘ O friend, within thee now doth lie
the fruit of the tree of Al Zakkûm,
and in thy body now doth boil
as should the dregs of boiling oil :
this for thy sins the fitting doom.
But when thy torments shall be ended
shalt thou of Abraham befriended
pluck the fruit of another tree
which shall bend its branches down for thee—
Tuba the tree of happiness
that in the Prophet’s palace is,
yet of this tree a branch doth reach
unto the house where dwelleth each
of the believers in his bliss.
Yea, verily shalt thou eat of this :
quinces and nectarines and dates
and golden figs or pomegranates ;
as it shall please thee, for this tree
hath for celestial property
that whatsoever the faithful will
presently its boughs fulfil :
thus, if no fruit but venison

or partridges thy soul desire,
or robes of silk, or beasts to ride
that trappings rich caparison,
these from its fruits shall burst as fire
bursts from Al Zakkûm at thy side.
And upon earth of finest flour
shalt thou most delicately tread,
as rising from thine amorous bed,
by the bright fountains or the streams
where emerald for pebble gleams
thou wilt to spend a wandering hour.
And from the throne of God shall blow
a gentle breeze and gentle motion
shall agitate the tinkling ocean
of golden bells that row on row
shall hang upon the golden trees
bowing to meet this heavenly breeze.'
Thus to the friend that burneth must
from the wall Al Araf speak the just,
making to shine before his eyes
the lesser joys of Paradise,
nor will he speak to him in hell
of the superabundant bliss unknown
to all save those around God's throne,—
bliss that never an eye hath seen,
bliss that never a tongue can tell,
bliss that never an ear hath heard,
bliss that in no man's heart hath been,—
surpassing sight and touch and word,
which when the blessed once hath gotten
straight are those lesser joys forgotten,
and beyond reach of sound or speech
with eyes of the spirit more than sight,
morning and evening, noon and night
he doth communion hold with God.
Thus much of Iman boots to tell,"

quoth Zobeir—" Iman which is half
of Islam as ye all know well,
being faith in God and in every angel,
in the Prophet and in the holy book,
in the day of judgment when the chaff
from the true wheatsheaves shall be shook,
and in the absolute decree
which is for each man destiny,—
for verily is no man able
to circumvent the preservèd table,
whereon from all eternity
his lot upon earth, his joy in heaven
or in red hell his misery
hath been inscribèd ; but of Din
which of Islam is the other wing,
and is the practice of the faith,
now for a short space would I sing,
that he of Christ who gainsayeth,
and he of Buddha that remaineth
with wreathèd brow a-pondering
may hear and know this sacred thing.
Fourfold it is and first is prayer,
and purification practised ere
we fall to praying and in the morn
ere yet the first sun-ray be born,
and when from the meridian
beginneth to decline the sun,
and in the afternoon before
the set of the sun and in the eve
ere day be ended, and once more
when the day is shut shall the muezzin give
notice from every steeple crying
of every mosque and straight replying
unto the call to prayer we leave
our toil or pleasure to adore
the only God, for 'tis the pillar

of all religion and half the way
carrieth prayer to God, they say,
and fasting to his palace door,
and giving alms we enter there.
And the inward being of the heart,
that is of prayer the vital part,
for vainly on our knees we kneel
if in our hearts we do not feel
reverence, devotion, hope arise : " —
he spake and as he spake the cries
of the muezzin sounded clear,
piercing the scented atmosphere.
And Zobeir quick his discourse staying,
knelt where he stood and fell a-praying,
and with him all the faithful prayed
who of the palms had found the shade.
And the Man of Ind was plunged in thought,
but John Mansour the whisper caught
of the fountains in the stillness spraying
with drops of glittering water bright
the marble spaces and the light
coming and going of the doves
around the marble fountain playing ;
and for the nonce his memory flew
back to the past and the present grew
more faint as visible again
his days of boyhood and of youth,
his father's and Monk Cosmas' loves,
and how at a leap he did attain
the helm of power and all the pain
he had suffered for the sake of the truth ;
and the Blessed Virgin coming down
to tend him in her pale blue gown
and the very words she said to soothe
his anguish and the universe
tinct with the quality of heaven,

as unto him the bliss was given
with the Mother of Jesus to converse.
Yea, to have looked on Mary's eyes
is to have been in Paradise
aye, to have gazed on them is worth
all other joys that are in heaven :
then what by these are the joys of earth ?
Such are the thoughts and the visions flitting
before the eyes of John as sitting
he waiteth till his friend Zobeir
hath made an end of his evening prayer.
And soon 'tis ended and Zobeir
will finish what he was a-telling
when the muezzin's voice first rang
which for the Moslem as the clang
of the church bell's reverberant pealing
is to the Christian—and a sound
methinks more human since it calls
from heart to heart, than the bell's rebound
as the clapper on the metal falls.
And soon were the prayers of Islam over,
and soon Zobeir from his knees arose,
“ And, sirs,” said he, “ to be a rover
at the fixed hours of prayer is vain
if the heaven of Islam one would gain,
therefore no quest for pardon goes
forth from my lips to thee, Mansour,
nor, O thou ebony man, to thee,
that here my prayers have taken me
forth from your presence, but endure
our heaven-ordained discourtesy.
For as of Mecca, so of prayer,
as well be Christians or Jews
as never to have journeyed there
or the hours of prayer to abuse.
And now of fasting, now of alms,

which of Iman are the other parts :
his breath who fasteth verily charms
Allah in heaven more than musk ;
but the greatest fasting is the heart's
whereto is hunger but the husk
of a goodly fruit ; and Ramadan,
that is the month of the great fast,
yet after sunset may a man
eat and drink and love till past
are the vigils of the copious night ;
then when a black thread from a white
he first can tell at the break of light
must he fast again, and if the moon
dwelleth in Capricorn (for she
passeth in years thirty and three
through all the houses), then no boon
is the light of the day and the burning hours
of Ramadan are hours that test
the souls and bodies of the best.
But now of alms to tell—the flowers
of ancient generosity
were in a nosegay bound together
once and that scented fellowship
lends me this little tale for ye,
bright with the kiss of many a lip.
Three men in the Kaaba argued whether
of three great men the freest giver
were Abdallah nephew of the Prophet,
or Kais Ebn Saad Ebn Obadah,
or of the Aws Tribe Arabah,
and long those three disputed of it,
till one that heard cried out : ‘ For ever
will ye dispute, and word and deed
are as the substance and the shadow,
therefore my counsel is ye go
each to his friend and feign a need

ye have not, thus ye shall surely know
which of the three hath most to shew
of the fair flower generosity.'
And they agreed and first did go
his friend to Abdallah and lo
found him in stirrup mounting up
about to take a long journey.
'O kinsman of the Apostle of God,'
cried he, 'my weary feet have trod
the desert of necessity
hitherward winding unto thee.'
And straight from the camel's back sprang down
Abdallah, and : 'O friend,' he cried,
'take this my camel, take the gown
of silk, the vests, the golden pieces
(they are methinks two hundred score)
but the sword which in the saddle's crease is
this always let with thee abide
since in his girdle Ali wore
that steel which unto me is more
than all the gold that the earth doth hold.'
Thus to his friend did Abdallah,
and the second friend to the second prince
betook him, Kais Ebn Obadah.
And when to his door he came a servant
met him and asked him what his want,
'For not an hour hath flown,' said he,
'an hour not twain we have counted since
first for a score of busy days
deep sleep her soothing finger lays
upon my master's brow, but see
if his servant can do aught for thee,
such as if woken from the sleep
which now his weary members keep
would he I serve of a certainty.'
And up and spake him friend the second,

how that he travelled and did want
for everything that gold can grant ;
and presently that servant reckoned
unto that friend seven thousand gold
pieces, 'and more doth the house not hold,'
said the servant, 'but see thou bear this token
unto the guardian of the camels
and a camel and a slave shall he
furnish for thy necessity.'

And now from his sleep had Kais awoken
and unto him his servant tells
of his friend's dry necessity,
and Kais cried out : 'Thou shouldst have broken
those chains of sleep which held me fast,
for with my friend I fain had spoken,
fain had I found for him somewhat more
from out the secrets of my store ;
but lo this day shall be thy last
of servitude for thou didst well
as in his hand thou didest tell
the golden stream in the burning gleam
of the noonday sun, yea thou art free
that served our generosity.'

Thus to the second, and thus befell
to the third of the friends who straightway wends
to him of the Aws, to Arabah.

And drawing near he meeteth him
and for that now his sight is dim
upon the shoulders of his slaves
posed are the palms of Arabah ;
but when the fable of the woes
of the friend surely Arabah knows
pardon of his dear friend he craves
that nought hath he of gold in fee
'but lo these slaves shall be to thee
for aid in thy necessity,

and if thou take them not ' (for now
 shames him the friend and with many a vow
 will have them not), ' behold I make
 freemen of both,' and so doth take
 groping his way along the wall
 that friend most generous of all,
 he of the Aws, Ebn Arabah.
 Yea, generous free the Arabs are
 and truly doth the saying live :
 Only where men have the heart to give
 have the women heart to deny."
 Here ceased Zobeir and all to cry :
 " Having told of Islam and the Prophet,
 O Zobeir, deign thou to explain
 after his passing what befell,
 how Islam waxed, for we know not well
 how all the different parties of it
 moulded and cast like the potter's clay
 form but one mighty vase to-day
 whereof the Kaliph is the stem."
 And Zobeir smiled upon them
 " And wide," quoth he, " are the water's rings
 which over and over and over lapping
 spread outward from the mighty things
 which when the Prophet passed were happing.
 For Omar came and gazed on him
 within Aïcha's chamber dim
 and all his love gushed forth to hide
 the truth of the eternal sleep
 which now his master's features keep.
 ' Liar thou liest lies,' he cried,
 to him who standing at his side
 strove to make clear the truth ; ' the Prophet
 liveth and whoso doubteth of it
 him doth his rebel will deceive.'
 And to the mosque he hies him straight

and to the people speaks : ‘ Believe
no word they say of the Prophet dead
though verily for a space is fled
his soul to Allah as Moses’ did,
but again he cometh and will not die
till are extinguished utterly
all hypocrites and infidels.’

Thus as he raves a door comes open
on the court of the mosque and the speech is spoken
which as a fresh west wind dispels
the smoke of Omar : ‘ Nought was he
but the prophet of God and lo if ye
worship Mohammad, he is dead,
but the one God liveth and dieth not ;
now since the Prophet’s breath is fled,
will ye to make apostasy ?’

And all men had these words forgot
save Abou Bekr who standing there
spake from the place whence he led the prayer.

And true and mild, yet resolute
was he and elder than Omar
by fifteen year, and red his hair
dyed with a red dye as his beard ;
but Omar bulked immense like war
wedded to peace that doth salute
gently the world as though it feared
nought but its likeness to the brute.
And dyed his beard as his friend’s was dyed
and each had all that was denied
unto the other and their love
had been as eagle and as dove
unto the Prophet passed away ;
yet not a word did the Prophet say
naming or one of these or those
whose names Medina’s echo throws
for challenge unto Mecca’s walls,

to be for Kaliph, but the die
this way or that or some way falls
and this the moment that destiny
the Kaliph from the future calls.
For as round Abou Bekr they crowd
cometh a messenger and bowed
is Abou Bekr's, is Omar's head
as to the message they give heed.
A loadstone message, for : 'Place ! make place !'
cries Omar as away they speed
forth from the mosque till face to face
in the Medinans' meeting hall
they stand with those who would decide
with whom the new-born power shall bide,
two men of Mecca against all
that the Medinans hold of great,—
(but what are many men to fate ?)
And on a bed in a corner lay
one of the twelve, Sad Obada,
one of the Pledge of Acaba,
sick of a fever and he shook
as through his veins its course it took.
Him the Medinans loved and they
almost to him had plighted troth
ere Abou Bekr and Omar came
big with the weight of destiny.
This when he knew waxed Omar wroth
and : 'Men of Medina, hark,' cried he—
but Abou Bekr cried : 'Omar, stay,
and when I have spoken say thy say.'
Omar was silent and : 'Your fame,
men of Medina, as a rock
made all of glittering gold doth shine
beyond the reach of the tempest's shock ;
and the words that whispered are by Sad
(for since he lay in grievous plight

Sad must whisper and friends recite):
‘These are of gold as red, as fine
as are the deeds which they have clad.
True, but for ye the Prophet driven
forth from Mecca in vain had striven
to bear the message of the Lord ;
but, men of Medina, the true word
of me and of mine, of thee and of thine,
(turning to Omar), had been given
unto the Prophet, for we are
of the Prophet’s tribe and first to dare
are we, but first to do are ye
who first for him have waged war.
Therefore ’tis fitting ye declare
the Vizier, but from us who stand
first of the nobles of the land
let the Kaliph rise !’ ‘But twain are we
and therefore twain let the Kaliphs be,’
cried the Medinans. ‘Never so,’
hurled as a javelin at the foe
Omar for answer. ‘Hear him not,’
cried Hobab, ‘harken unto me
who as the stem of the well-rubbed tree¹
give the best counsel and if they
will hear ye not, my breath is hot
upon their faces, I that roared,
Lion of the desert.’ ‘May the Lord
destroy thee, Hobab,’ Omar cried,
and Hobab in like words defied
Omar and drew his circling sword.
But Omar upon Hobab rushed
and seized the weapon and to and fro

¹ A palm-stem placed for cattle to rub themselves against.
A metaphor for one whose counsel is much sought.

surged the Medinans and they crushed
Sad as he lay on his bed that nigh
by the weight of his friends he was to die,
for some there were that fain would go
with the men of Mecca and some for Sad
and some for a double Kaliphate.
But Omar with red rage was mad,
mad with the righteous wrath of fate,
and here and there as a giant going
words and blows as it chanced was throwing
on Hobab and on all who dare
claim for Medina any share
in the rule of Islam and he hurled
damnation upon Sad enfurled
in his couch's wrapper, but now his friend
saw the moment ripe and : ' Make an end,'
cried Abou Bekr, ' of this dispute,
and if it please ye now salute
Omar for Kaliph or an ye will
Abou Obeidah who shall fill
right worthily the place.' But : ' Nay,'
cried the twain together, ' thou hast led
the prayers of the faithful since the day
that the Prophet died, and therefore now
stretch forth thy hand and take our vow.'
And Abou Bekr as they bad him did.
And hand upon hand they struck and swore
faith and allegiance evermore ;
and of Medinans many an one
struck hand on hand and pledged his faith.
And those for Sad seeing now was won
the Meccan victory forthwith
sware, for they said, ' 'twere best to choose
this Meccan and so choosing lose
the rule of Islam, for if Sad
reigned over us, his tribe would be

for ever first for good or bad.'
So these too sware for jealousy.
Now all have sworn, save only one,
Sad in his fever all forlorn,
vowed to oblivion's silent scorn.
And forth they fare from the meeting hall,
and of the Meccans all rejoice
that Abou Bekr reigns over all,
and harken to his kindly voice.
And need hath Islam of one word,
and need of Khalid's conquering sword.
For the false prophets have arisen.
And first Moseilama's yellow face,
upturned nose and dwarf disgrace :
Moseilama who dared to write
unto the Prophet for division
of Islam between ' Me and Thee,'
now in Yemāma doth unite
a mighty force, for he shewed an egg
in a bottle of a narrow neck
willing their credence thus to beg
who nothing see, nor know, nor reck,
and made a Koran for their use
among his faithful—an abuse
of all the teaching of the true.
And though an upstart and as vile
dog as the desert ever bred,
not only did he thus beguile
thousands to follow, but he knew
the art of war, and Ikrima fled
disgracefully, and thousands fell
of the faithful whom this fool had led
unto the slaughter, and : ' Depart ;
thou shalt not see me as thou art,
nor of thine evil-doing tell,'
writ Abou Bekr to Ikrima ;

‘depart unto the uttermost coast,
and win thee back the name thou hast lost,
outbattled by Moseilama.’
And Khalid went to fill his place,
and glory shone upon disgrace.
For on Yemāma’s plain they met,
Khalid and false Moseilama,
and on his right did Khalid set
the city Arabs, and on his left
the sons of the desert, counting thus
on ancient rivalry to whet
their courage, and : ‘They smile on us,’
said the townsmen, ‘since we are bereft
here on the right of the desert might ;
but they shall see that such as we
ask not for teachers in the fight !’
And the battle joined, and a furious wind
blew in their faces as to blind
with the sand the faithful ; but Zeid, who led
the men of Mecca, cried : ‘For shame !
ye waver, ye of the glittering name !
close fast your eyes, clinch hard your teeth ;
charge and be counted with the dead,
Paradise won, or live and slay
every apostate here to-day.’
He cried and charged where most did seethe
the fight, and Paradise he won.
And the greatest of Islam one on the other
fought and fell, bright warrior brother
calling aloud his warrior’s cry
unto his brother, proud to die.
And for he thought his men did shun
the very ramping jaws of death :
‘Woe be to ye for this backsliding,
men of Medina, faint of breath,
and faint of heart, I am clear of ye ;

see, I join me to the enemy,'
shouted Ibn Cays his men deriding,
and as he spake he rushed and died
in the seething mass and his freedman cried :
' Craven bearer of Al Koran,
craven bearer of Islam's banner,
were I if now I feared to die
even as my master, I his freedman ;'
thus as he shouted loud he ran where
his fallen master's banner waved,
and from his dying hand he saved
the banner and he fought and fell
speeding apostates thick to hell.
With such ensample blazing bright
furiously charged the rank and file.
And backward and forward yet a while
swayed the close-linkèd line of fight.
Then of a sudden Khalid knew
the moment come and in all men's view
he charged and : ' Ya Mohammeda !'
he cried, and ' Ya Mohammeda !'
an hundred hundred warriors cried,
and men of the desert and men of the town
bore on the vile apostates down
and the yellow desert crimson dyed.
' They break ! they break ! They fall away !'
cry out the faithful and their charge
is as Euphrates' wave as large.
' Fly to the garden, I will stay
their oncome,' brave Mohakkem cried
unto Moseilama and he
fled with a goodly company
unto the garden and the gate
they shut, though Khalid follows close.
And a wall around the garden goes
which a moment stays the sword of fate.

For the warriors of Islam round and round
 swarm but no entrance can be found,
 and barred and bolted is the gate.
 Then Beraa, one of the Twelve, cries out :
 'Lift me on high that I may spy
 from the top of the wall ;' and he gazes down
 on the army which the garden keeps ;
 then with the mighty battle shout :
 'Ya Mohammeda !' down he leaps
 and slashing left and slashing right,
 doth Beraa with that army fight
 and open wide the gate hath thrown
 and earned eternal bright renown
 who fought and won the gate alone.
 And as the waters of the sea
 finding an inlet suddenly,
 they fall upon Moseilama,
 and maugrè all his magic art
 a javelin strikes him to the heart,
 and maugrè flower of chivalry
 must all his warriors slaughtered be.
 But of the faithful many fell
 to make this mighty victory,
 of Bedouin, of Refugee¹
 and of Medinans long to tell.
 And tears in Islam's households ran
 adown fair cheeks and Al Koran
 lost of its Readers² many an one.
 But Khalid once the fighting done
 wedded the daughter of his foe
 upon the field, nor did he know
 scruple nor doubt nor any fear,

¹ The Refugees were those who fled from Mecca to Medina on account of the Prophet.

² The Readers were those who knew the whole Koran by heart.

but laughed and loved and made good cheer,
though with the blood of thousands slain
blushed to behold Yemama's plain.
But Abou Bekr when now he knew
this deed of Khalid writ and threw
drops of blood on his grievous writing;
but Khalid laughed and cried: 'The maid
less than the Kaliph was dismayed,
and such the fitting end of fighting.'
Thus by the flash of Khalid's sword
was done the bidding of the Lord
in Araby, but far away
on the fat fields of old Chaldæa
by Tigris and Euphrates' stream
again the sword of God must gleam,
and vain was Hormuz' linked chain
to fetter courage and banish fear
and vain the springs which the Persians held
and Khalid to the fight compelled,
'For,' said he, 'these springs shall be
to the braver of us twain,' and sent
challenge to Hormuz whom he slew
in single combat in the view
of both the armies and he drave
the Persian to Euphrates' wave.
And the crown of Hormuz crushed and bent,
yet bright with jewels, Khalid sent
for gift to the Kaliph, with the fifth
of the spoil and for the crown were told
an hundred thousand coins of gold.
And with the crown and with the spoil
over the desert to Medina
behold an elephant must pant,
and never before had the women seen a
monster of girth so vast, so royal,
and the women cry: 'Kind Khalid sent

this toy to be for merriment
unto our children ; great in all
is Khalid, in his gifts not small ;
but fain would we the hinges know
which move the ponderous and slow
progression of those massy feet,
fain would we see by what strange hap
its ears like palm-leaves come to flap,
and fain the winding tube discern
which every way the thing can turn,
right fain pick out its little eyes
to be for jewels.' Thus they greet
in Araby the victories
of Khalid and the first he gains
is this, the battle of the chains,
since Hormuz bound his men together
in a knot for Khalid's sword to sever.
And havock-hunted o'er the plain
fled those that could unto Madain,
' twin city ' of Persia, built upon
the place where once was Ctesiphon,
where once Seleucia and the flow
of Tigris sweepeth by its walls,
and Tigris to Euphrates calls
for here those mighty streams draw near
and each the other's voice doth hear ;
and many voices once they heard,
these waters as in evil hour
upreared its shadowy head that tower
of Nimrud which is Babel's tower ;
and of all languages one word
they know and whisper as they flow
past Babylon which cannot hear
now since for many and many a year,
all grass-bemantled, grass begrown
is that her once most delicate ear,

and blocked the portals of her eyes
and lapped in grassy mysteries
are the ways and windings of her street
which sounded once with lovers' feet.
Yea, all her glories now are flown.
But for the battles of Khalid, now
awoke the Persians and they said :
' Best with Arabian blood and bow
are the arms of Araby combated.'
Therefore the Beni Bekr they called
to arms, that tribe of Araby bred,
yet long to the Persian yoke enthralled,
and an Arab chieftain over these
they set, and the veteran Bahman led
the troops of Persia, but Khalid knew
their doings and across Euphrates
to the eastern bank he passed and drew
the enemy forth and long they fought
and doubtfully till the ambuscade
which in his wisdom Khalid made
sprang on their rear and ruin caught
Persian and Arab renegade.
This was the battle of Walaja,
and Khalid to his warriors spake :
' Warriors ! conquerors ! see what are
the riches of Persia, fatness drops
from her paths, her very stones do bake
to bread, and, warriors, nothing stops
and all things call on ye to make
this holy war—these waving fields,
and maids and matrons whom ye take
by the right hand captive, for judgment written
gives these to those who shall have smitten
their heathen lords and Persia yields
beauty divine enough to slake
Euphrates' self if all his waters

lustfully craved for Persia's daughters.
Therefore be true and I will lead ye
where the best of Persia's best shall feed ye.'
So Khalid spake and need had he
thus to make bright the vantages
falling to his, for everywhere
the Persian rose, and Araby
met Araby again and these
were as the fabled dragon's fangs
upsprung the dragon's self to tear.
For first of the battles Khalid fought
at Allis felt he all the pangs
of the general of a doubtful field,
and as he suffered, so he swore
that if to victory were brought
the arms of Islam they should yield
unto the Lord the Victory-Giver
of the blood of His foes a blood-red river.
Therefore when now at last they fled
Persian and Arab renegade,
unto his troops gave Khalid order
that of the fugitives none should die
by the hand of his captor, but all be brought
into the camp and ranged in order
line upon line within the bed
of a dry canal, and so to lie
that with the falling of each head
its ruddy torrent should be shed
as from a fountain : and thus he sought
to redeem the oath that he had made
unto the Lord the Victory-Giver.
And as Khalid ordered, so they did.
But flow would it not, that blood-red river,
though for all a night and for all a day
did the faithful there the heathen slay,
till seventy thousand heads had fallen.

Then an Arab chieftain up and spake :
‘ O Khalid, never shalt thou make
the blood of His foes in a blood-red river
flow to the Lord, the Victory-Giver,
until His waters thou dost call on,
for verily the Lord hath bidden
the earth that never upon her face
shall a man’s blood flow for a longer space
than is the measure of his dress.
Therefore my counsel is : throw wide
the flood-gates and the waters hidden
downward shall flow in crimson tide !’
And as he counselled, so was done,
and for three days a blood-red river
flowed to the Lord the Victory-Giver.
But Khalid now the battle won
supped on the field and his arm did rest
upon a Persian chief, whose crest
level with the plain that arm had smitten.
And all the faithful made good cheer
with the viands and the fritters white
left by the Persians in their flight,
such as before had never bitten
their teeth of ravenous delight.
And to the Kaliph Khalid sent
the fifth of the spoil, and ‘ O ! draw near,
ye men of Mecca and of Medina,
Helpers, Companions of the Flight !
Behold ! the lion of Islam springs
on the lion of Persia, and he wrings
his prey from him,’ the Kaliph cried,
when the piles of treasure first he spied ;
‘ never on earth shall again be seen a
Khalid as this—the womb is void,
exhausted, utterly destroyed
that bare a lion such as he

to rend the Persian empery !'
Thus cried the Kaliph as he sat
an aged man within the gate,
but Khalid upon Hira moved,
and Hira fell and Duma fell,
fair glittering towns—too long to tell
the pageantry of how they fell—
save that as basilisk the name
of Khalid now to Persia proved ;
(for till he came to Duma shame
followed the faithful) and the fame
of Khalid shook the battlements
of Hira that its people laid
the keys before him, for they said :
' Verily now will wall on wall
upon our heads devoted fall,
for worse than Khalid's armaments
is the knowledge that his spies have found
of the stone that is the chiefest stone
of all our buildings, which withdrawn
shall Hira all be overthrown,
ruinous crashing to the ground.'
And thus the antique tale which told
of the keystone in the palace hid
served Khalid, as indeed now did
chances and destiny and skill,
for as a rich man's hoard of gold
waxeth at usury, so will
the fame and fortunes of the bold—
or if such metaphor be old :
fortune of war as fortune of women—
empty the cup or overbrimming.
And of these feats of arms the telling
is equal to devout long spelling
of Al Koran, as a night in arms
is more than many an orison,

though both unto the Lord have charms,
though both are Islam, both upon
the sacred tables are enwritten.
This Khalid knew and having smitten
the Persian that he did not dare
move hand nor foot to walk nor ride,
but Khalid's shadow stalked beside,
willed Khalid now to make his prayer
within the holy Kaaba,
for the holy month had come again.
But for he willed that none should know
his pilgrimmage across the plain
which from Firadh even unto Hira
stretches, he bad his army go
in marches easy, dalliance-slow ;
and that they make but little speed,
for ten long days beneath the blaze
he drilled them of the Persian sun
at Firadh, and when now was done
the tenth day's drill : ' The army need
to Hira make but little speed,
and lo, I follow with the rear,
and a day or twain shall linger here.'
Thus to his army Khalid lies,
and slipping forth in due disguise
with an escort of a faithful few,
a faithful few, but ne'er a guide,
from Persia over Araby went
Khalid the sword of God and knew
as never man before nor after
the windings of the trackless waste,
and where the springs of water hide,
and many a desert date did taste,
of many a desert spring he quaffed, ere
dawning on Khalid's swordbright eyes
Mecca the Holy City lies

within the hollow of her hills.
And every duty he fulfils
but keepeth always his disguise
so subtly well that in no wise
did men even dream as fast he ran
with the rest from Safa to Merwan,
or the pebbles in the valley threw,
or when his lips the Black Stone knew,
that this the very arm that drave
the power of Persia to the grave,
that these the very lips which spoke
and the false prophet's power was broke.
And when the duties now were done,
back o'er the desert Khalid hies,
and as the soaring falcon drops
from blue invisible Khalid stops
the last of his rearguard's lingering feet
and with them enters Hira's gate ;
and Khalid's generals come to greet
their general with : ' Perfay, great sir,
right well you do in this great heat
moving with very little stir ;'
and Khalid smiled, nor did he tell
of the shadowy flitting he had made ;
but answered : ' Yea, I have done well.'
And not a word of all was said,
nor did the Kaliph come to know
of Khalid's stealthy piety
till many and many a day had fled.
But now began a right brave show
of arms in Syria, and the glow
cast from those watch-fires long ago
brightly upon us yet is shed.
But long too long would the telling be
if I unfolded unto ye
how the other Khalid came to fly

and the Kaliph's curse upon him lit,
 and he must wither under it.
 Too long to tell how great and small
 make answer to the Kaliph's call,
 and Yazid and Muavia vie
 with Amrou, with Abou Obeidah,
 how the companions drew nigh,
 victors at Bedr, and these obeyed a
 general of yesterday, of to-day
 if the Kaliph's voice had said : 'Obey.'
 But wherefore rise they in their might,
 the flowers of the faithful, whom to fight
 is need of all this blood so blue?—
 Sirs, do ye mind that I told to you
 how the Prophet to the Emperor writ,
 to Heraclius Emperor of Byzance,
 who crushed beneath his mailed heel
 the Prophet's letter and thought fit
 to dwell in purple ignorance
 of the Prophet and the Faith's appeal?
 Lo, now the point of Islam's lance
 hath pricked the Emperor's Syrian heel,
 and he will stretch his mighty arms
 to do immensities of harms
 unto 'these wild Arabian tribes'
 (for still he speaks in sneers and gibes
 of the power of Islam), but to Hims
 nevertheless he doth proceed,
 together drawing mighty limbs
 'to brush this gad-fly, pluck this weed.'
 And ninety thousand men did lead
 Theoderic the Emperor's brother,
 and George and Caycar each another
 army of well-nigh equal might,
 one on his left one on his right,
 led downward to the stream Yermuk ;

and all God's earth beneath them shook,
and shook the minds of Islam's chiefs
as by the stream on the plain these took
position, and Amrou spake and said :
' O brother generals let us wed
our tiny forces till reliefs
reach us from Mecca and let caution
be unto each of us for portion.'
Thus spake that crafty well-rubbed tree
Amrou and Islam drew together
and the Romans faced them on the bank
of the Yermuk on the mighty plain
Wacusa hight, and there on three
sides is there nought but precipice,
and on the fourth the tearing river
deep in the bosom of Syria sank
carving thereout a sheer ravine,
flowing precipitous banks between ;
but by a narrow neck to gain
the road is possible. This was seen
of Amrou and across the stream
Islam he led and now they gleam,
jewels of Islam, on the plain
hard by Wacusa and the neck
and the road they block and thus they check
all issue for the Roman host.
But crafty and wise though Amrou be,
yet doth he lack that falconry
which with a swoop more swift than sight
strieth the quarry and strieth right.
Therefore full many a day we lost
and Roman valour sometimes crossed
the narrow neck but again withdrew,
and scarce a meal the vultures knew
hovering in thousands over the plain
though all their hovering was not vain.

For when the Kaliph read the letter
of Amrou, and Abou Obeidah :
quoth he : ‘ Perdie ! no man is staidier,
nor worthier than Abou Obeidah ;
than Amrou’s wit there is no better
between Fostât and Nineveh,
yet have I now the certainty
that though I sent them all they ask—
emptied Arabia as a cask
of human vintage to give power
unto their arm, an evil hour
were that for Islam for they lack
the genius of the great attack.
And in all Islam is but one
whose sword once thrown into the scale
outweighs the chance of schemes that fail,
whose doing is the Lord’s will done—
Khalid, the very sword of God.’
Therefore to Khalid writ he straight :
‘ Hail ! all hail ! thou Lion of Islam :
with thee well-pleased, ill-pleased I am.
Behold I know the path thou hast trod
in pious disobedience
from Hira even unto the gate
of the Holy City—but get thee hence
even unto Syria where forlorn
the faithful meet the Emperor’s scorn,
and scarce his heavy heel withstand
down trampling all the Syrian land.
Forward ! and take of the troops that are
at thy command the moiety ;
Forward ! O Khalid, and fulfil
full measure of the Lord his will
unto mankind and the sins of flesh
shall not thy valiant soul enmesh.’
Thus sent the Kaliph vinegar

mingled with honey unto Khalid,
and the flower of his army straight he rallied
even as the Kaliph's letter bid.

But brave Mothanna spake : ' With me
O Khalid leave one flowery half
of Islam's chivalry, lest slip
all Persia from Mothanna's grip,
for now thou leavest but the chaff.'
Thus as he spake Mothanna pointed
where curled and perfumed and anointed
with unguents of the Persian nard
crowded round Khalid for his guard
the flower of Islam's chivalry,
while on the outskirts of the plain
stood those of lesser valiancy,
of lesser birth, and strength and brain.
So Khalid gave unto Mothanna
one flowery half to hold the banner
of Islam in the east on high
—ten thousand men or very nigh—
and with like number forth fared he
over the plains of Araby,
over that red and sandy sea
which hath for name Nefud and came
unto the place of Coracar,
which having plundered, for it lay
on the Syrian border, half a day
he halted and for councillor
unto his tent a Bedouin came,
well versed in desert lore and : ' Say
O Bedouin, O desert-haunter,
knowst thou a track whereby I may
coming to Tadmor thus surprise
mine enemy who at Bostra lies ?'
' O Sword of God ! O danger-daunter !
such track I know, but I have met

the bones of many a cavalier
glistening along the waterless drear
extension of its level line.

But for an army ! never yet
hath any but a courser fine
galloped with reckless cavalier
along its soft and sandy face :—

nay better far to die in war
than in such sandy soft embrace.'

Quoth Khalid : ' Bedouin, thou hast shewed
unto me just the fitting road.'

And when they cried to him : ' Beware
O Khalid overmuch to dare ;

five days across a waterless waste
to move an army !' ' Perilous

is nought to him who hath for aid
Allah in heaven and high resolve,'

quoth Khalid. And the Bedouin : ' Best
if we fare forth, to take with us

five thousand camels, first having made
them thirst, then drink, then drink again,

then bind their ear and slit their lip,
that thus their tongue may not revolve,
nor water from their stomach slip.'

And forth they fared and faring slayed
at every stage of camels ten

for every troop of an hundred men,
and of the water but one draught
by every man each day was quaffed.

And with the fifth day now hath end
their water, but the sands extend

quite smooth between the sandy hills
where should have been the bramble-tree,

mark of the well-spring. Terror fills
the soul and body of the guide

as he casts in vain from side to side.

At length he cries : ' Come search with me,
search for the root of the bramble-tree,
which if we find not, we are lost.'

Ah ! then ten thousand sandals crossed
and crossed the sands, ten thousand eyes
glared on the blank equalities
of softly falling silent sand,
stirred it full many a strenuous hand,
seeking the root, and Khalid prayed
unto the Lord to be for aid.

Suddenly one that delvèd found,
deep hidden in a sandy mound
the bramble root and : ' Great the Lord !'
hoarsely they cried, and running bored
deep in the ground with spear for spade,
and the up-bubbling spring they found.
And first they drank and next they prayed.
And with the first of the morn they fell
on Tadmor stricken with amaze,
then by the Hauran and the ways
of Adzarat doth Khalid pass
even to the Yermuk, where he joins
his strength unto the straining loins
of Islam—and his conquering spell
also upon the Roman fell.

But not at the first victorious was
the sword of God for five they are
—Amrou, Muavia, Yazd, Obeidah,
and Khalid fifth—and wears away
a month in many-voiced delay.
But Khalid watched and Khalid saw
the stirring of the God of war
in the Roman tents on Yermuk's plain,
and to his fellows spake : ' To gain
the victory now, supreme command
must dwell within a single hand,

for look ye, sirs, the field hath changed
since Abou Bekr in four arranged
the order of battle ; four no more
are the Roman armies, but united
they joy to see us thus divided ;
and by the rumour humming now
within mine ear they do prepare
their onslaught, and I see not how
with arms divided we shall e'er
face to their Roman faces break
their unity. Therefore let us take
supreme command, each for a day
alternate, and if so ye will
I shall the first command fulfil,
Amrou the second, and each one
in order till the war be done !'

'Let it be even as thou dost say,
O conqueror Khalid,' answered they,
'be thou our general this day,
Amrou the morrow, and each one
alternate till the war be done.'

Thus with soft words did he enveigle
those captains four, but once gained o'er
they were to him as hawk to eagle.
And forty battalions now he made
of a thousand each, 'for thus,' he said,
'shall our petty army wide outspread
bulk to the Roman twice as great ;'
and twenty thousand men did stand
for centre in Obeidah's hand,
ten thousand on the right with Yazid
and with ten thousand Amrou tarried
upon the left. And forth they come
and as a swarm of bees they hum,
mounted in glittering panoply,
the Roman warriors, and they seem

innumerable as they gleam
moving on Islam, and one said
who stood by Khalid : ' Lord ! how few
the faithful.'—Khalid : ' Peace ! poltroon,
bleared is the blinking of thy view ;
if but to count aright thou knewest,
how few the Romans, but the boon
to count aright is given to fewest :
for know ! by the Lord's will numbers gain,
by the Lord's will do numbers wane.
By Allah ! had I under me
my steed Zuleika, I would see
doubled the Roman armament
and laugh for mighty great content '
(Zuleika's hoofs were worn away
passing Irac and Araby).
He spake, and as a surging sea
the Roman army frothed and bubbled,
drew back and came again redoubled ;
and ' Charge ! and drive them back for me,
Amrou and Ikrima,' cries Khalid.
Even as he speaks in dusty weed,
with eyes of fire and features pallid
gallops a messenger with screech
come from Medina, and they crowd
to know the news and : ' All is well,
he cometh hither but to tell
that aid from Araby is nigh,'
speaks Khalid forth both clear and loud.
But in his ear the messenger
whispers a word and doth deliver
a letter which right speedily
reading drops Khalid in his quiver.
' And, see that close thou followest me,
even at my side and talk with none
till I give thee leave'—thus Khalid speaks

unto the messenger as he rides
where the first wave of battle breaks.
Now forward faring gallopeth one
towards Khalid, and his horse's sides
are cloth of gold, and camlet fine
and vair and true vermilion
shew where the polished steely line
of his armour ends, and Khalid cries :
' By Allah ! now this Roman dies
even by my hand as Hormuz died
and twenty others who defied
Khalid to combat. Get ye back
and see that none of ye attack
as I fall on him '—and battle stays
to watch the issue, but amaze
now upon all their faces plays :
for : ' I am George, the cavalier,'
cries unto Khalid drawing near :
' George, general of a great division—
behold the warriors following me—
but I will join me unto ye
for the creed of Christ is for derision
unto me since the wondrous vision
of Islam and its Paradise,
of Al Koran, of Gabriel
and of the blessed turban green
of the Prophet as I met his eyes,
and thus he spake : " O George, to dwell
in Islam's Paradise or in hell
is for thee to choose, for thee to lose
on the morrow as thou shalt have been
with Khalid and the powers of light,
with the Emperor and the powers of night ;
for, George, I tell thee, tell thee true
that on the morrow thou must die
whether thou fightest for God on high

or for idolatry." In my view
he mounted upon Alborak
and the stars made flash in the skyey track.
"Be wise," he cried ; "be wise, adieu."
Thus unto me did the Prophet speak
not in the Arabic but in Greek.'
'Blest be the Prophet of the Lord,'
cried Khalid ; 'George, thy Roman sword
steeped in the Roman's gore shall be
for all of Islam unto thee,
since by the Prophet's mouth they must
this very day be turned to dust.'
Thus Khalid spake and : 'Abide with me
the little space thou hast to live,
O George,' said he, 'for I shall give
a splendid passing unto thee.'
Now when the Romans saw their chief
gallop towards Khalid, their belief
was even as Islam's that he willed
alone with Khalid combating
and over Khalid triumphing
to win renown, or smitten down,
for Christ to die in Paynim field.
But when they saw that George did ride
with Khalid : 'Lo ! his arms are tied !
Prisoner is George !' the Roman cried ;
'yon caitiff Khalid hath defied
the courtesy of war,' thus shouted
the ireful Roman, thus he flouted
Islam, and Khalid's valour doubted !
And now with pomp of spear and lance
gallops the chivalry of Byzance
on Islam, and its furious blows
break Islam's line and Islam knows
for the nonce confusion, but Ikrima
crieth : 'Shall I who dared defy

the Prophet in days of ignorance
turn now and flee before Byzance ?
To me, my friends, to me, Dhirar !
come join the covenant of death !'
Four hundred breathe assentient breath ;
they charge and the columns following George
waver and turn, but now they burn,
faithful and infidel, and urge
one side and other frantic strife ;
and maid of Islam even and wife
join in the battle and these gave
and gat the death, as bright, as brave
as the men of Islam—radiant eyes
all made for lovely ecstasies,
see with war's lightings how they gleam.
Thus fought they and the dust like steam
rose all about them that the sun
loomed yellow through the clouds of dust,
and Khalid watched until begun
was a rift between their horse and foot,
and in this rift his centre thrust,
cleft as a wedge the oak-tree's root
their foot and horse, and lo the chasm
Yacusa yawns behind the horse,
and charging with white terror's spasm
thunderously these take their course
back upon Islam with the force
of torrent dammed. Then : ' Stand aside :
give them free passage,' Khalid cried.
Headlong those horsemen gallop by
free to the open, nor will try
the panic chance of arms again
for ever on Yacusa's plain.
To the right and the left then Islam turns
and to the chasm Islam spurns
the Roman footmen and they fall

even as an overtoppling wall
into Yacusa's gaping jaws,
an hundred thousand, and the chained
drag down the free to die with them,
and the Roman general Ficar draws
his toga round him and its hem
with heart-wrung tears of blood is stained.
And on the morrow nought remained
upon the plain, save Islam only,
and to Theoderic's royal tent
Khalid with step accustomed went
and mourned and worshipped long and lonely.
And first for George he mourned and prayed
who in the thickest fight was slain
toward the evening, and he died
martyr of Islam, though he said
but once his prayer right hastily,
and fought, but never prayed again.
And Ikrima and his hero son
and well-nigh all the brave four hundred
must Khalid mourn, and Khalid wondered
Dhirar to see alive, for he
with wounds like crimson blossoms shone.
And having mourned and having said
the prayer for friends and heroes dead,
called the four generals by their name
Khalid, and to the tent they came.
'And, sirs,' said he, 'the victory
with the arms of Islam is to-day,
for the Lord's will hath Islam done ;
and the God of Islam is but One,
and the Prophet of Islam is but one,
but when he died his power came
to Abou Bekr to hold the same ;
but, sirs, now Abou Bekr is dead,
and Omar ruleth in his stead ;

behold the order Omar sendeth
wherewith my captaincy he endeth,
and Abou Obeidah for Ameer
in Syria nameth Omar here.'
Therewith the letter open wide
laid Khalid, and the generals cried :
' O Khalid, take and keep our thanks
in this thy victory, for our ranks
more by the fame of Khalid grew
than if the floating sand-grains blew
together, and a world of jinns
had fought for Islam.' ' Mighty prince,'
Obeidah cried : ' I pray of thee,
since thou hast Sword of God for name,
be thou yet Sword of God for me,
give me thy counsel lest I slip,
lest at this last the Roman strip
thy robe of victory from Islam,
seeing how slight a thing I am
by thee, O Khalid.' And Khalid said :
' Never shall Islam ask in vain
the best of Khalid's arm and brain.'
Thus Khalid served magnanimous
under Obeidah, and they stayed
awhile upon Wacusa's plain,
tending the wounded, burying dead,
and of the opulence of spoil
counting to each his golden gain.
Bright is the land of Gilead
and rich in wheat her billowy soil,
and oak and olive give their shade,
and in the myrtle groves the dove
tells to the brooks the tale of love,
new with the gay green carpeting,
the flowery carpeting of spring.
Such was the picture Khalid saw

spread out his eagle eye before ;
but little did he gaze thereon,
nor gazed on Lebanon nor Hermon.
For Syria and her holy places
must fall to Islam when the queen
of the world's cities falls to her.
Thus spake he, and the listening faces
of Obeidah, Amrou, and the rest
knew that Damascus was that queen,
and that since Khalid coveted her
for Islam his desire was best.
And Obeidah bowed to the behest
of the great Khalid, and they rose,
and soon the might of Islam goes
skirting those green and billowy spaces
of Gilead, over Hermon tops,
and lo ! the sea of Galilee
glitters beyond, and Khalid drops
down from the very hills we see
shine to the south, but Heraclius
knew also that if now Damascus
fell to the Arabs, at an end
was the Roman rule in Syria.
Therefore a thousand archers bend
their bows, a thousand slaves attend
the Roman archers as they wait
upon the walls above each gate.
And nigh two hundred days slip by,
and weary the warriors of Islam are
sitting before Damascus' walls,
whose feet are lost in sands of time,
whose eldest stones are next sublime
to those of Islam's Kaaba.
Yea, that for me were long to tell,
how Khalid came to know the night
that Nastus chose to celebrate

with cheer of wine and meat and cate
 the birth of a son, and darkness fell ;
 and : ' Now,' said Khalid, ' all is well,
 for those that feast think not to fight.
 Ha ! Madzur ! Ha ! my Cacao !
 flowers of Islam, what say ye
 to an escalade ? Right pleasantly
 we will proceed, and first to float
 on these swelled skins across the moat,
 and then to scale yon opposite wall,
 which is more high more low than all,
 for the highest wall is ever lowest,
 since those that guard are ever slowest
 aught of misfortune to await,
 when with high walls they have bribèd fate.'
 And Cacao laughed and eke Madzur,
 and : ' Of us as of old thou mayest be sure,
 O Khalid, who have helped thee harry
 the dovecot of the Chosroës.'
 ' Ha ! that is well,' laughed Khalid back,
 ' but see ye, in this night attack
 all is surprise, for we must carry
 surprise not only to the Roman,
 but also to his Arab foeman.'
 ' How so ?' said Madzur. ' Amrou is
 at the gate Tuma. Shorahbil
 at the gate Farâdis,' answered Khalid,
 ' and worst of all Abou Obeidah
 at the gate Jabia ; to fulfil
 my purpose forth we must have sallied
 and gained *our* gate from the inner side,
 then first the cry of Allah Akbar !
 shall rouse the slumber of Obeidah ;
 (but never can it be denied,
 and oft hath been in battle tried
 the courage of Abou Obeidah

our general), but since each may choose
or chance to spy a breach, to lose
the chance of war by calling those
whose weight would sink my careful plan
deep in the moat, that will I not.
But if ye will, O Cacao,
and thou Madzur, quite ready are
ladders and ropes of clinging nooses
and fourscore hands of those who wot
that Khalid tries but what he can,
and ventures but when Khalid chooses.
Come, do ye will to join the feast
that Nastus makes this night ? The fare
is meagre but the trophies rare,
and when we come to feast with him
methinks the Roman chief will share
what most he hath of rich and rare !'
Thus laughed these warriors light of heart,
and the sentry on the rampart dim
drowsily nods as now they start,
phantoms of warriors floating o'er
that misty moat, a reckless score.
See ! they are landed and they creep
like tigers to the wall and throw
their nooses upwards, and they keep
their hold and upward, up they go.
Now they are mounted ! which was first,
Madzur or Cacao ? none can tell,
and least of all the sentinel
as from his mouth the blood doth burst,
and dead he falls, and very soon
his fellows join that drowsy loon.
Now to the gate, and blow upon blow
must bolt and bar and rivet know.
Behold ! 'tis open and 'Allah Akbar !'
they shout and the gate wide open throw.

And 'Allah Akbar !' near and far
 echoeth loud and in they flow,
 those swords of Araby that drave
 the Persian to Euphrates' wave.
 Forward they fight, and the street called Straight
 they block with corpses, and the narrow
 alleys and vestibules and porches
 gleam red with blood and blazing torches;
 but as the flight of the well-winged arrow
 Khalid Madzur and Cacao
 and the score that scaled the walls before
 seek where the chiefs and Nastus are,
 and on the way the torches play,
 and groans of men and shrieks of women
 unto their ears like music come,
 for when the war-god rageth then
 are gentleness and pity dumb.
 But when they win the palace gate
 meets them no vain, no weak parade
 of revellers driven forth to die,
 but at the head of a cavalcade
 Obeidah's steed is caracolliing
 and 'twixt the corpses daintily
 he steps nor ever asks controlling
 from the hand of Abou Obeidah.
 And Khalid crieth : ' By Allah say
 how comest thou here ? ' ' By the western gate,
 which lieth open, and thou must stay
 the sack, for signed and sealed are
 the terms of yielding.' ' By the beard
 of the Prophet fairly stormed and carried
 is Damascus,' furious crieth Khalid :
 ' what boots it that the Roman feared
 the sword of God when the eastern gate
 was won, thus yielding all too late ?
 Those that have nothing left to yield

can make no terms, and mere chicane
as this of Nastus cannot shield
his town nor townsmen.' 'But, in vain
thou pleadst for blood for signed and sealed
is the surrender, half their wealth
is ours and half their wealth is theirs
and all their lives Obeidah spares
which yet are living : therefore stay
the swords of thy followers, Khalid :—stealth
was thine as theirs and mercy wins
her battle when 'tis ours to slay
and none resist us, brighter jewel
than ever shone in crown of prince,
in the hilt gleams mercy, the more cruel
in the battle's heat the warrior's blade.'
Thus Obeidah spake and Khalid stayed
his warriors and the Eye of the East,
unto the Eden of Islam changeth
and Islam over Syria rangeth
even as the lion, though a while
Heraclius striveth yet at Fihl,
where Khalid like the tawny beast
leadeth the van and bright Dhirar
the plunging, springing, hoofs of war,
and in the quaking deep morass
Byzance an evil ending has.
Too long to tell of Theodore
smitten on hip and thigh as he
thought to win back Damascus city—
Khalid before, Yazid behind,
like wheaten ear that millstones grind—
and how Obeidah scudding o'er
the plain on Hims, threw out his net
to snare the fleeing Emperor
yet gat him not, and how he set
the siege of Hims and weeks belated

the promised succour Hims awaited,
nor yielded till the Lord did shake
and breached the walls with the Lord's earthquake.
Northward we pass and Laodicea
first of full many towns doth rear
ramparts defiant—Laodicea
laughs as we raise the siege and night
falleth as Islam slips from sight—
open her gates will Laodicea
safely since nought is left to fear—
swift as the dash of the clawed invader
swoops back the squadron of Obeidah,
open or shut, O Laodicea,
ours are thy gates full many a year.
Northward we win and at Kinnisrin
wrecks Khalid havock and Aleppo
likewise the sword of God must know.
Queen of the East is Antioch,
and here at the least those walls of rock
mile upon mile that leap ravine,
that climb the mountains to embrace
this queen of cities will brave the shock
of the arms of Islam—here the Roman
will prove his lineage, drive disgrace
from his ancient name and face his foeman.
Nay, but Heraclius fast is flying,
nay, but the best of their defying
is on the plain without the town,
and as the spring of the desert lion
is the spring of Islam and those flee
back to the city that scathless be,
and as the serpent's coil environ
the Queen of the East the coils of Islam.
Soon from her jewelled hands the sword
fell and for mercy she implored.
Thus upon Syria came the arm

of the Lord and further and further fled
the Emperor till at length he stood
on the last hill of his westering
whence yet he might see anything
of Syria's sun-lit plain and wood.
And bowèd was the Emperor's head
as for the last time eastward he
gazed on his vanishing empery,
and stretching towards her with his hand :
' Peace be unto thee, Holy Land,
that bearest in thy bosom his bone
who doth for all men's sins atone ;
peace be unto thee, and farewèll,
farewell, I say, for now not ever
in all the blossoming of the years
shall Roman tread thy soil for ever,
saving with trembling and with tears
until on earth shall walk the beast
that moveth hornèd from the east.'
Thus spake Heraclius as he passed
pale to Byzance, but in the dust
him seemed that somewhat whitening gleamed
by the wayside as at the last
Syria he fled since fly he must.
And ten years doing rolled away
and he stood a pilgrim by the way,
he saw the shreds of the Prophet's screed
which rending he had scorned to read,
again he saw the endless line
of those that bare the cross divine,
and in the distance gleamed the city
which hath for name Jerusalem.
Ten years had flown and the memory came
back on Heraclius as a mirage,
and bending down he wept for pity
and the tears upon his wrinkled visage

were tears of love and loss and shame.
But here would I sow ere the wings of time
shall fan them away such seeds of rhyme
as in flowers of memory upspringing
within the garden of your minds
shall far outvie the sower's flinging
of little grains on rich deep ground.
Where can the word, the speech be found
to tell of how Jerusalem
from the Christian unto Islam came?
Jerusalem whose very name
the eye of reverence well-nigh blinds?
Sacred for us as for ye the place
where Jacob lay, and the rock his pillow,
whence mounting upon Alborak
the Prophet sped by the starry track
yet beareth the ineffable trace
of the Prophet's foot upon her face,
for soft for very joyance grew
the rocky pillow when she knew
that the Prophet of God upon her stood.
First Kibla of Islam, aye toward her
turned the Prophet at the prayer,
and with him all the faithful turned
and toward Jerusalem they yearned;
till at Medina on a day
turned he toward Mecca, and as a wood
when the south becomes the northern breeze
turn all the faithful as the trees
will bend their leafage, and we pray
towards Mecca turned still to-day.
But how Jerusalem came to fall,
this tell I not, how Artabûn
fleeing from Amrou flees to hide
his shame in the reeds by Nilus' side,
and how the Patriarch Sophronius

craveth of Amrou for a boon
that he the Kaliph's self may call
even from Medina to receive
the keys of the city, and even thus
did Omar, and the first to leave
of all the Kaliphs Araby
was Omar and in habit lowly
moved Omar toward the city holy.
But Amrou, Yazid, and Obeidah,
and Khalid decked in raiment golden,
saddle and bridle thick with gem,
waited without Jerusalem
the coming of the great commander.
But Omar when he had beholden
their splendour, blushed, and stooping down
took gravel in his hand and threw
towards them and : 'Avaunt !' he cried,
tricked out like Satraps to the view.
'Lo, not a score of years hath fled
since the Prophet passed and here defied
is the rigour of Islam !' And they said :
'O Commander of the Faithful, see,
these be but toys ; behold beneath
concealèd is our valour's sheath !'
And gold and jewels thrust aside,
they shewed their steely panoply.
Yet Omar frowned and still the frown
was round his brow as kneeling down
Sophronius at the city's gate
implores his pity who is more great
than Emperor, than Chosroës,
than any monarch that doth tread
the level earth, and lo, 'tis fled
the frown and : 'Fear ye not at all,
O Christians, for to Islam is
Jerusalem the holiest city

even after Mecca, and our pity
is to our reverence but the call
which now I answer : ye shall be
enrolled among the favoured cities,
and light the tribute unto ye,
and every church and every shrine
which unto ye is for divine
untouched of Islam these shall be
inalienable unto ye.'

And the Patriarch stooped and kissed again
stirrup and hand that held the rein,
craved of the Kaliph that he would deign
perambulate the sacred town.

And now hath Omar mounted down
and with the Patriarch proceeding
courteously followeth his leading
from holy place to holy place,
and courteously giveth heeding
to the Patriarch whose eye and face
shine for pure joy that all his pleading
findeth with mighty Omar grace.

Forward they fare and now they stand
within the church that Constantine
builded, and lo the hour of prayer
is come, and : ' Dost thou here command
that thy prayer carpet be outspread ?'
asketh a follower, but benign
makes answer Omar : ' Better 'twere
without to spread it, for if I pray
within the church then is it lost
unto the Christians from this day,
for the Faithful will rise up to thrust
the Christian forth, since never must
the worship of the One God mingle
with many Gods, for God is single,
and since the only God is One

only to Him is worship done.' Thus Omar speaks unto Sophronius in courtesy, but his voice sonorous doth roll along the church's wall, shaking the pictures that they fall, and the images idolatrous in twain by Omar's words are cloven, as Omar goeth forth to pray. And having prayed as is behoven, forward they fare and coming where is the pillow of Jacob and the place whence mounted upon Alborak the Prophet passed by the starry track, behold with bramble, weed, and thorn quite hidden is the footprint glorious. And the Kaliph when he sees forlorn this holy place, doth bend him down, and labouring with hands august cleareth the weed and briar and dust, (and eke Sophronius standing by must cross himself for piety). And having cleared the sacred rock : ' Here,' said he, ' is foundation stone for the mosque which Islam shall upraise, where those to come shall only praise the God of Islam.' As he spake behold the sun of even brake her golden arrows round the head of giant Omar and they tread, Kaliph and hoary Patriarch, returning steps and night is fair, for the moon and the stars of heaven shine, as Omar goeth forth again unto his tent upon the plain ; and followeth him the glittering line of captains and the Patriarch

journeyeth Khalid unto Hims.
And when he cometh, an assembly
ordereth Obeidah in the mosque,
and in the pulpit standeth he
and Khalid in the centre gleams
like oak that ivy growths imbosk.
'Answer me, Khalid,' speaks Bilal,
'whence came to thee that vast largesse
which all abroad the Syrian land
floweth like water from thy hand?'
But Khalid answereth not at all,
astounded even unto dumbness.
Stands Bilal forth, and : 'Thus and thus
the Commander of the Faithful saith,
and he ordaineth law to us,'
crieth Bilal, and he unwinds
the kerchief from the head of Khalid
and with the same his hands he binds
and from his head the helmet taketh.
Now as a thief grown sudden pallid,
see where the mighty captain stands !
Now no man dareth breathe a breath.
Again that thunderous voice demands
the same and Khalid speaks at last.
And : 'Mine to give was all the gold,'
answereth he, and Bilal fast
loosens the kerchief from his hands
and again around the helmet binds,
and places on the head of Khalid.
'Champion of Islam still we hold
thee, Khalid, driving from our minds
those lies thine enemies devise,'
crieth Bilal, whose clangorous voice
summoned the Prophet's self to prayer ;
and all the faithful now rejoice—
yea, joy is written broad and fair

upon all faces—all save one—
Obeidah dwelleth yet in gloom ;
for lo, another in the room
of Khalid now at Kinnisrin
must rule, yet hardly can be done
the duty lest he should offend
Khalid the hero, comrade, friend,
whose government is as a pin
unto the worlds his sword hath won
for Islam, and he knoweth well
that Omar's hate doth masquerade
in robes of the cloth of justice made.
Therefore beside him for a spell
he craveth Khalid's company,
nor a word of his disgrace doth tell,
save by his silent sympathy,
and Omar when he sees the task
more than the mightiest prince may ask
of sworn allegiance—(to abase
an hero ever draws disgrace
only on the doer)—presently
ordereth Khalid to Medina.
Khalid obeyeth the behest,
and standing face to Omar's face :
'Never, methinks, in the world hath been a
prince to his faithful servant meaner.
Behold, I have given thee the West,
Behold, I have given thee the East,
and now thou criest : "Methinks were cleaner
the hands of Khalid if for nought
Persia and Syria he brought
beneath my sway"—but even the least
of all thy slaves, the very beast
that grindeth out thy corn for thee,
I swear that they have had their part
in what they wrought with willing heart.

Behold! now eighty thousand pieces
gained I when Abou Bekr reigned,
and twenty thousand came to me
since thou wast Kaliph over Islam
(and the Lord He giveth what He pleases).
Take now the twenty thousand pieces,
but taking know (and this I swear
by the beard of the Prophet) that this arm
hath won for Islam gold enow
to build Medina all in gold,
and but for me would Islam bow
to Emperor and to Chosroës.’
Thus unto Omar Khalid told
the very truth, his sword made bare
for the last time before the Lord—
yet Omar took those well-won pieces
and writ unto the provinces
that the great Khalid ne’er again
should fight for Islam, never reign
in any government again,
but for no tyranny nor fraud
is Khalid thus disgeneralled,
unsworded : ‘Nay!’ (the Kaliph writ),
‘this have I done lest quite enthralled
to the arm of the flesh the people call
only on Khalid and forget
to call on Allah!’ Islam yet
sneereth at Omar that he writ
such letter as a slave should write
that hopes to hide his venomd spite.
Thus Khalid fell and back to Hims,
grown sudden old and worn and bent,
the sheath of the sword of Allah went.
Right long the road and weary seems
to him who once had flitted over
Irac and Araby, a rover
weariless as the desert wind.

But now are man and fate unkind
and soon that eagle in his eyes
flies home to roost, and Khalid lies
upon his couch as one that dies.
And now he shews them wound and scar
heroic from the fangs of war :
' And as an aged camel I,
even Khalid, lay me down to die
forsaken underneath the sky.'
Then turneth Khalid to the wall
his face and mighty Khalid passes,
and Islam heedeth not at all.
Yea, as a face in a moving glass is
the face of earthly fame and glory—
gone and the image scarce was thrown,—
yea, thus and thus is Khalid's story
who died disgraced, disgrudoned, lone,
Saviour of Islam.

But to tell
of Persia and the bloody fields
fought ere the Persian lion yields,
of the Battle of the Bridge where fell
our leader torn and trampled under
the elephant's hoofs, of the Persian banner
of panther's skins, a jewelled wonder
eight cubits broad, twelve cubits long,
here as a talisman unfurled,
of the elephants on Islam hurled,
how Islam fled and brave Mothanna
kept the bridge free—would weigh them down
these skimming dipping wings of song.
And how Mothanna won renown
at Boweib, battle of the Tens,
where dark before our cause regains
all that was lost—this tell I not—
an hundred thousand skulls remain

for sign thereof upon the plain.
But how the Persian Yezdegird
upon the throne of Chosroës sat,
a comely youth, and youthful fire
passed from his veins to his old empire—
this asks the telling, well I wot—
for all the Persians when they heard
that the bright bird, that Yezdegird
of blood all blue, of blood all royal
reigned over them, grew sudden loyal—
noble and villain joyed thereat,
and to the capital Madain
they flocked and flocked and flocked amain.
Which when he knew : ‘ I swear by the Lord,’
cries Omar, ‘ that our Prince’s sword
shall smite the Persian Princes down.’
And though Mothanna’s young renown
blazed upon Islam, for commander
chose they the Ravening Lion Sad
the son of Malik, since Mothanna
being but a Bedouin chieftain had
nought of nobility to command
the noblest names in all the land,
for Prince and Noble and Companion,
Poet and Singer—every one
with aught of strength in name or fame--
gathered the Kaliph in his hand
to hurl on Persia. Sad was brave,
of ancient lineage, and they gave
to Sad the honour of the blood
first drawn in Islam, for he stood
nigh to the Prophet, and ’twas told
how the Prophet when the field waxed hot
spake thus to Sad and to none other
like discourse ever deigned to hold :
‘ Shoot ! by my father and my mother !

shoot thou, O Sad !' Thus Islam got
both name and fame and hardihood
in Sad for chief, and soon we stood
with thirty thousand men upon
the battlefield Kadesia.

Before us did Euphrates run,
and to the left came curving round ;
behind, the desert and the mound
and trench of Sapor ; on the right
a swamp impassable :—thus were
the arms of Islam ranged for fight.
But as they wait upon the plain
cometh to Sad from Omar order
to send an embassy with the word
of God to new-crowned Yezdegird,
by Tigris' side, even at Madain ;
and if he hearken he shall gain
his country's salvage or prefer
an he will the tribute ; such they were,
the terms of Islam. So they choose
twenty great chiefs whose stalwart growth
with rank and eke with knowledge goeth,
and forth these pass upon their way.
Behold their steeds are champing, stamping
even at Madain, and the Persians lose
no sight of Araby's warriors,
clad in their striped robes of Yemen,
uncouth yet fearsome : ' Wolves and boars ;
and o'er their shoulders slung, their bow
is as the distaff of our women,'
sneereth the Persian—soon our arrows
which to such distaff are the spindle
for flax the lives of Persians know.
Now they have audience, see them kindle,
each as he speaks, for each hath part
in this great embassy and heart

joineth to head as they expose
unto the youthful Yezdegird
the faith of Islam and the word
of the Prophet and : ' Embrace the faith,'
one after other each one saith,
' or if thou wilt not, mayest thou choose
pay tribute, which if thou refuse,
then are the days of thy kingdom counted.'
Thus the Arabs spake, but Yezdegird
mocked at their speech and thus he taunted
the flower of Islam's paladin :
' Nought, ye are nought, O ragged herd,
barbarian from a naked land,
that darest Persia's soil to tread,
but not an armful shall ye win
save what I give with gracious hand.
By Ormuz and by Ahriman !
by Mithra, by the triple head
of Zarathustra's dragon band,
came ye not here an embassy,
this very hour ye all were sped.
Bring me a clod of earth ' (he cried
unto his slaves), and a clod they brought,
and : ' Take,' said he, ' and let he of ye
that is the greatest bear it forth
as from my city gates ye ride,
bound on his back ;' and Asim caught
the clod of earth and : ' O King henceforth
shall the sword between us twain decide.
Yea, we are hungry, yea, we are poor,
yet ours the truth thou mightest share
and with thy kingdom dwell secure.
Thou wilt it not, but rich and rare
is the gift thou givest, and we shall bear
this clod of Persia's soil to those
whose valour well the meaning knows

of such a gift on such a day.
Farewell, O King ; perchance again
we meet upon Kadesia's plain.'
Therewith they mounted hastily
and in a trice were far away.
Even as they passed the gate of the city
came Rustem, and : ' O King,' said he,
' what speech had the Arab chiefs with thee ?'
And straight unfolded Yezdegird
all that they said, all he replied
and how with insult subtle he
had given for gift a Persian clod
more worshipful than Islam's god.
But Rustem when this speech he heard :
' O King,' quoth he, ' not thou but they
are subtle and that clod of earth
unto the Arabs may be worth
those million million clods of clay
that make thine Empire, but maybe
rapidly speeding cavaliers
may yet meet those ambassadors—
have back thy Persian soil for thee.'
Thus Rustem, general in chief,
spake to his master and the King
when the sign he knew, was lost in grief:
horses and horsemen light of wing
haste after Araby to regain
the soil of Persia—all in vain :
for Asim never drawing rein,
sped onward till Kadesia's plain
came looming toward him and before
the feet of Sad he cast his burden :
' See what the witling Yezdegird
giveth to Araby for guerdon,
even his kingdom,' Asim cried,
and told their doing word by word,

how each with other they had vied
of the Faith to speak and the clod of clay
they gat for all their brave parley.
Even as he spake, the news ran through
the ranks of the faithful and all men knew
of the clod of Persia, knew that cast
was the die of war at this the last
(for many days had all awaited
decision of their chief belated).
And the Persian general Rustem knew
that war was on him, but there flew
unto his nightly bed such dreams
of ghastly face, of ghoulisn screams ;
there haunted him by light of day
portents so ominous on the way
from Tigris even unto Euphrates,
that yielding somewhat unto these
to Sad he writ when his army lay
nigh Babylon and armistice
he craved to treat of terms of peace.
But unto Rustem Sad sent word :
' Islam, or Tribute, or the Sword :
for thee to choose : and three days' grace
hast thou to ponder.' But there passed
the first, the second, and the last ;
and on the fourth crossed Rustem over
by a dam Euphrates and a place
on the western bank his henchmen found
whence he might view the battle-ground
seated upon his throne of gold.
An hundred thousand men they were
that followed him, both chained and free,
but Islam thirty thousand told.
And in his palace Yezdegird
ever the youngest rumour heard,
for the road was all with ears supplied

and with loud voice those criers cried
one to another that Madain
seemed within sound of the battle-plain.
But Sad did lie in grievous plight,
nor might his valour join the fight,
for angry boil and festering blain
made that he could not stand aright
nor sit upon his steed for pain,
but on a litter lay and came
to the wall of the fortress hight Codeïs
(which by the bank of the river is),
and to his warriors cried : ' No blame
can touch your general for this,
and ye, methinks, will mind the fame
of the Archer of Islam ; ' and they shouted
that none of them his valour doubted.
Then from the rampart exhortation
made Sad to these and made quotation
of Al Koran and when he spake
of the field of Bedr and the angel host
that fought for Islam, lo, they brake
into wild ardour for ' decision '
was the day of Bedr, and the discourse closed
when Sad commanded none to stir
' till past was the midday hour of prayer—
and the sound of the signal shall be " Takbir,"
" great is the Lord," which I will cry
from the battlements and ye reply ;
and at the second Takbir gird
your weapons on, and at the third
your steeds make ready, and fourth shall be
for " Speed ye on the enemy. " '

But the Persian moved when he had heard
of the four Takbirs sound the third,
and of the heroes of Islam some
challenge the Persian—see them come

forth from their fellows each alone,
pearls from the depths of ocean thrown—
and forth to meet them, see they ride,
those peacock's eyes of Persia's pride.
First met first fall as Amrou's thrust
bears the proud Selim to the dust,
whose jewelled girdle, bracelet, rings
back to the camp great Amrou brings,
and Ghalib of the tribe Asad
sings as he charges and is glad :
' O maiden of the hanging tresses
whose breast of milk this hand caresses,
full well thou knowest that this hand
lays low the enemies of thy land.'
Singing he falls upon his foe,
Hormuz, Prince of the Gate, and blow
answereth blow and clear they ring
and as a smith doth Asad sing
that beats an anvil and the chime
of answering blows is as my rhyme,
till Hormuz trips, till Hormuz falls,
exhausted, bloody, and he calls
for mercy and by Asad's side
walketh a captive that did ride
even now the Persian paragon.
But beyond all far brighter shone
the doing of the Thackifite,
and that his doing may have light,
first of the scoffers I must tell
who though they knew the truth full well,
yet sneered at Sad and : ' Blain for blain
giveth an arrow less of pain
than the blains of Sad,' they laughed, and : ' Many
widows in Islam will there be
ere we may gain the victory—
but widows of Sad will not be any.'

Thus scoffed they and the Thackifite,
 Abou Majain so sharp did bite,
 that by the order of Sad with chains
 they bound him and within the fortress
 the first of the battle he remains
 and the lovely Selma hath for wardress
 (Selma, the widow of Mothanna,
 wedded by Sad as was the manner
 of the heroes of Islam)—thus he lies,
 and though he hath the lovely eyes
 of Selma whereupon to gaze,
 as in the dungeon's depths they blaze,
 yet hath he comfort none but pain,
 and with a thousand vows and sighs
 pleadeth for liberty amain.
 And as he pleadeth Selma aye
 shaketh her lovely head and : ' Nay,
 how canst thou ask, when yonder Sad
 more with thy sneers than with pain is mad.'
 ' Ah ! lady fair, sweet Selma queen
 of the greatest chief that hath ever been—
 (not Sad, Mothanna 'tis I mean)—
 answer my prayer and hear me swear
 that if but an hour upon the plain,
 a warrior free I may career,
 back unto thy sweet ward again,
 back unto bolt and bar and chain
 I will return me safely here
 if life but live in heart and brain.'
 Thus speaks Majain and Selma smiles :
 ' Perfay, Majain, thy speech beguiles
 more by the memory of my lord
 Mothanna than by what thou sayest
 of Selma's beauty or of Sad
 my spouse, our master much adored '
 (and here a little laugh she had),

‘but if I loose thee, swear thou stayest
but an hour of battle and again
will let me bind thee with this chain.’
‘I swear, fair Selma, yea, I swear,’
answers Majain, and now she toys
with the chain that binds him, and the noise
of the fight without, of blow and shout
reaches them faintly, and she saith
(while on his face he feels her breath
oasis-sweet): ‘Go forth, Majain,
for see, I loosen now the chain,
and since thou lackst a steed, the white
charger of Sad waits on the right
hard by the gate and this his ring
will charm the varlets ; see thou bring
the ring and the charger back with thee,
and bring thy valiant self to me.
And on the rampart I will stand
and watch the deeds that thou shalt do,
warring upon my Persian foe.’
Kisseth her once upon the hand
Majain all burning to regain
the open air, the ruddy plain,
and scarce she winneth to her lord
upon the rampart when : ‘Behold,
methinks he gallopeth overbold
right in the Persian jaws, alone,’
quoth Sad, ‘what cavalier unknown
wieldeth so well the flashing sword ?
See ! he hath scapèd him again
and twice a Persian chief hath slain,
curving in circles on the plain.
Now, by my troth, did I not know
that safe beneath Majain was lying
I’d swear ’twas he and the steed mine own.’
(See where the blushes come and go

on Selma's cheeks.) 'My Lord I left
Majain a moment past,' quoth she,
'and on his limbs right heavily
weighed the great chain, and I was glad
thinking it galled his body so,
that dared to jeer at thee, O Sad,
my well-beloved.' Thus the deft
Selma cajoles her lord and sees
Majain draw near the castle wall,
and as the mighty Sad is writing
orders which written straight he drops
over the ramparts (and the fighting
of Islam hangs upon his writing),
see where Majain the hero stops,
and as a truant at the call
of master soon is on his knees
before fair Selma and the chain
she bindeth on his limbs again ;
then with fair finger laughs and chides
that nigh two hours from her he hides
among the Persians and : 'I saw
one Persian Prince and one Prince more
fall by thy hand and now hath done
Majain his will, methought, and now
to Selma comes, but scarce begun
was then thy doing, and they fell
before thee as from bridge of hell
at the judgment day'—and on the brow
kisseth Majain, then out of reach
withdraweth Selma and : 'Thy vow
Majain to me thou hast kept full well.
Now see ! I make a vow to thee :
that on the morrow thou art free,
which if I break, then Sad shall preach
alone from the rampart whence I fell.
For gazing in Mothanna's eyes

I learned to see where valour lies,
and lo it shineth clear in thine.
And on the day of Islam's need
that were a piteous thing indeed,
if for the sake of a word in wine
Islam should call on thee in vain,
bound in a dungeon with a chain.'
Thus Selma speaketh and she hies
back to her lord, and well she wrought,
and on the Night of Clangour fought
again for Islam great Majain.
But though fair Selma loosed his chain :
'Yet,' said he, 'ever round my heart
a chain more strong hath Selma wound
of radiant eyes, of sweetest sound—
footfall and speech—and she hath bound
all with the falling of her hair
as she bent o'er me—everywhere
I am in prison, nor would part
for all the gold of Araby
with the chain she winded round my heart.'
Let stand these words for memory
of Selma and of great Majain,
and to the Battle, for less long
were the single combats than my song.
See now the elephants like castles
with warriors manned and banners waving
bear down on Islam and in vain
the bravest with such monster wrastles ;
for at the sight the Arab steed
flies on the wind, nor giveth heed
to bit nor bridle and the saving
of Islam now on Asim falls.
For when our centre breaks they bear
down on the wings and pound and tear
with tusk and hoof of ponderous gear

that at the Bridge alike down-trodden
was Islam never and the plain
as a marsh with blood and brains is sodden.
Now of an hero Sad is fain
and droppeth from his castle walls
to Asim order that he save
the day for Islam though he pay
for price the bravest of his brave.
Thus writeth Sad and Asim calls
on the archers of the tribe Temmim,
and where he leads they will follow him
and to the rolling castle's close
Asim with those his archers goes
and on the corpses piled they stand
and aiming with unwavering hand
they pierce the guardians of the beast
that brings destruction—and released
from governance these roll away
like billows when the tempests stay.
And Islam rallies as the night
falls on the plain and day the first—
'Armath'—a doubtful ending hath.
But with the first of the sun there burst
on the eyes of Islam joyous sight—
Cacaa's self from Syria come—
and of his warriors, Hashim some
leadeth behind, but Cacaa taketh
with him a thousand and as breaketh
the sun upon Kadesia
so Cacaa with an hundred men
cantereth lissom o'er the plain,
and behind him nine hundred are.
See where he crieth salutation
to Sad and bringeth exaltation
to the hearts of the faithful as he speaks
of the five thousand drawing nigh.

And from his steed he mounts not down,
but straight for a Persian foe he seeks
equal in valour and renown.
Sudden there flashes on his eye
Dzul Habib, hero of the Bridge,
that wreaked on Islam dule and ravage.
'Vengeance !' cries Cacao, and hath mown
like tallest grass Dzul Habib down.
Twice fifty strong across the plain
in companies charge Cacao's men,
and as they pass the armies by
greetings to friends, to foes defiance,
and 'Allah Akbar !' loud they cry.
'Allah Akbar !' and now reliance
on the new comers for Islam grows
as sinks the courage of her foes.
Cacao leads and Islam throws
her best upon the Persian front,
and but for Rustem's name and fame,
now from the field would Islam hunt
the lion of Persia, but Persia rallies
and as the eve of the second day
falls on the field their families
mounting from sire to gorgeous sire
declaim the Arabs and they pray
to the Lord the giver of victories ;
and the Persian too will keep the fire
of battle in his veins ablaze,
and to his Persian idols prays,
and calls upon his ancestors.
Thus all the night the lion roars,
the mighty lion of great wars,
and a doubtful issue likewise hath
this second day, the day Aglath.
And Selma stood by the bed of Sad
night long and : 'Sir,' she said, 'they cry

aloud their glorious ancestry.’
And Sad made answer : ‘ Never bad
is the fortune of Islam when they call
their ancestry beneath the stars,
for they would never wish to shew
to the souls of those their ancestors
but glorious doings, splendid scars ;
let sleep upon mine eyelids fall,
nor wake me, Selma, save they grow
less frequent on the air of night,
those names and deeds of bygone might.’
Thus answered Sad, and deep he slept
and watch by his side fair Selma kept,
and saw the white and trembling dawn
creep o’er the battlefield forlorn.
And for a mile between the foes
thick lay the dead and for a space
they stayed their arms as the sun arose,
and the women sought for the loved one’s face.
And the wounded straight beneath the sun
they bare to the rear and every one
they stayed to shade beneath the palm
that waves by the way, the only one—
blessed be thy shade, O grateful palm !
But nought of philtre, nought of charm
saving their presence and such care
as love and sympathy can give
had the women for the wounded brave,
and to the most the Lord he gave
the crown of martyrdom to share.
But with the living men must live
and to the women leave the dead,
for the battle opes and the dawn is fled
and in the banners here unfurled
hangs all the coming of the world.
‘ Behold, he chargeth !’ Islam cries

triumphantly as Hashim hies
and not a moment veers nor falters
Hashim, nor once his course he alters,
but with his warriors straight doth charge
and the hordes of Persia pierceth through,
even unto Euphrates' marge,
then turning, fetcheth round again
full circle on the dazzled plain,
and the armies marvelled at the view.
Welcome to Islam now they are
Hashim and his and Cacao,
for on the second day, Aglath,
nought of the elephant Persia had,
but on this third, the day Gemath,
a vast, a new, a montrous herd
cometh from Chosrões Yezdegird
with warriors manned and armour-clad.
And when they charge must everywhere
the Arab fall, and soon despair
on the Arab faces giveth place
to the early morning's valiant face.
For trampled under foot and pounded
are man and horse and quite confounded
are Asim and his archers' band,
for with a shield protected are
the guiders of the elephants
and Asim's arrows harmless glance
like straws from off these armed places.
Then in the hour of peril Sad
bethought him of some Persians who
refuge within Codeïs had,
and from these recreants he knew
that the elephant's eye the deadly place is.
Then unto Cacao he writ
where on the battlefield he raged
(and thirty men by midday slew

Cacaa alone) and the letter said :
' O Cacaa, thou alone art fit
to rid us of calamity ;
Take then whom most thou wilt with thee
and pierce the elephants in the eye,
for if thou pierce them deep they die.'
And having read the missive stayed
Cacaa his combat and with him
took but one friend his brother Asim,
and toward the herd their way they made.
And of the monstrous breed were twain
monsters of monsters, one was black,
but the most monstrous he was white,
splashed red with blood, and for attack
lo ! first they choose the elephant white.
And on his left side Asim shows,
but Cacaa creepeth on the right
even to his ear and see ! has thrust
into his little eye the lance.
Belloweth loud the beast and throws
and pounds his warriors in the dust
and winds his tube round Cacaa,
and as a missile hurtling far
over the plain the warrior goes.
Certes but little esperance
hath Asim as he raiseth up
his brother stunned and to his lips
holdeth the crystal water cup ;
gently the water Cacaa sips
and as he sips comes back again
memory and sense and : ' ha ! perdie !
where be the elephant I lost ?
By the Prophet's beard full near his brain
forged my lance ere yet I crossed
so rapidly Kadesia's plain.
Two things I lost—the elephant white

and Cacao, now finding me
seek I the elephant,' and : ' Bright
O brother Cacao shines thy deed,'
spake Asim ; ' turn thee and behold !
And Cacao turned him and he saw
the monster maddened, uncontrolled,
dash on the Arabs, and a score
of lances met him and his speed
was as a rock from mountain rolled,
as on the Persian ranks returning
and like a moving furnace burning,
he rolled him to his monstrous herd.
What vasty elephantine word
spake he unto them ? none can tell ;
but they his meaning knew full well,
for straight their monstrous tubes uprearing,
roaring and trampling, smashing, tearing,
all in their path they pound their ways
even to Euphrates and enorme
plunge they within, and now the storm
of arms is still, for mute amaze
falls on both armies as they gaze
on that portentous company,
like islands swimming in the sea,
and now they gain the distant shore
as all men gaze and now no more
are visible—and all men fall
to arms again and soon the plain
rings with the clashing of the sword,
whistles with passage of the arrow,
hears hero unto hero call,
for very well do all men know
that he that wins is overlord
of all the world and he that loseth
for best of fate Euphrates' wave
unto a bed of respite chooseth.

Yea, hard were the knocks they gat and gave,
and again a doubtful ending has
the third day's battle hight Gemas.
Endeth the day but the battle not,
for scarce had the Persian warriors got
within their tents and the shades of eve
crept o'er the plain when the Arabs leave
their quiet tents and stealthily
creep towards the tents where now they sleep,
the weary Persian enemy;
for well they argued that the night
would favour those that chose to fight
beneath her mantle; so they fell
upon the Persian. Forge of hell
never shall ring with shout and yell
more awful as the Persian flies
to arms and to Persian Persian cries,
Arab to Arab, and they fight
through the black watches of the night,
the Night of Clangour dark and gory
shows sable with a sombre glory
against the gold of Islam's story.
And on the fourth day all amazed
the sun upon Kadesia blazed,
for lo, the Persian stood his ground
heroic though the Arab's wound
like serpents in his lion's mane.
Then Cacao cried: 'Come charge again,
for victory ever doth attend
him that endureth to the end.'
Thus Cacao speaks, and straight they charge
with spear and lance and bristling targe
the Persian centre. 'Lo! they break,'
shouts Cacao, as a mighty rent
even through the Persian centre went.
And blue Euphrates gleamed through

the riven coat of Persia's valour
and then did Islam first have view
of Rustem's throne and canopy,
where on Euphrates' bank they were.
Sudden a fearsome wind there blew
and the unguarded canopy
into Euphrates' waves it threw.
Now 'Allah Akbar !' loud they shout
and now begins the Persian rout,
and Rustem flies from his golden throne
and hides him 'neath an ass's pack,
but a chance javelin hurtling thrown
bringeth the load on the Prince's back
and now Euphrates' kindly wave
must wounded Rustem seek for grave ;
but scarce hath he plungèd him therein
when by a passing warrior seen
dragged to the bank he is straightway slain,
and on the golden throne the slayer
climbeth and doth the death declare,
and his voice echoeth o'er the plain.
And the slayer from his body took
jewels for seventy thousand pieces,
but vainly for the crown must look
merged in the bosom of Euphrates,
and for the jewelled panther's banner
ta'en on the field the taker's price is
an hundred thousand golden pieces,
and of Jalenus when he fell
by Zohra's lance the jewelled wonders
make Sad to pause and ask of Omar
if such vast treasure could be well
given to the slayer of Jalenus—
but from Medina Omar thunders :
' Give all the jewels unto Zohra
and that there be no doubt between us

see that thou add five hundred pieces,
and see such doubt for ever ceases.'
Thus right and left and far and near
Islam triumphs at Kadesia,
for though the chieftain Hormuzan
escaped with some, and Firuzan
fled ere they reached him by the dawn
even to the mound of Babylon,
yet is the victory complete,
and now the Persian nobles greet
the Arab conqueror and Sad
rules as its lord the whole Sawad.
But of the Tigris, how they swam
its roaring stream and lit upon
the bank, and the Persian fled away
unto the mountains, and Madain
and the palace white of Chosroës—
the great white palace of the plain—
cowered before them—all of this
asks more of eloquence than mine,
asks more of patience than is thine,
methinks Mansour, since now to thee
are wealth and power for mockery,
but give me ear one word to tell
of the treasures which to Islam fell
when Yezdegird with all his herd
of courtiers, wives, and concubines,
fled unto Holwan from Madain,
and Islam on that couch reclines
where the best of all things beauteous shines,
nor thinks to yield the couch again.
First, then, behold those mules whose freight
is well concealed as past the gate
and towards Holwan they fare. Full soon
beneath the big eye of the moon
hath Islam led them back again,

a long grey string unto Madain.
What lieth hid beneath the mean
straw matting as they hoist them down
those mule-loads? First the Chosroës' crown
and robes and girdles such as seen
once then the sumptuous robes of dream
mere base reality must seem.
A camel of silver, camel-size,
with a golden rider who for eyes
twin diamonds hath, a golden horse
whose neck a ruby and his teeth
sapphire, and carven trappings sheath
his golden sides and fixed beneath
his hoofs an emerald meadow cross.
And of the weapons five there were
swords of a worth beyond compare,
not for the priceless jewels which
do court the splendid blade of each,
but for their history glamorous.
First of the glorious blades to us
had the sword of mighty Cæsar come
imperial from imperial Rome,
and next the sword of the Chosroës
unto a gift for Omar is,
and the sword of the Cæsar maketh glad
the side come whole of noble Sad,
and the sword of Bahram fallen from heaven
is to the hero Cacao given,
and on the blade there stands engraven :
'The sword of the mighty hunter Bahram,
mighty before the Lord I am.
Let not a lesser hero dare
my blade against his side to wear :'
and the Arabs laughed and said that fate
unto the sword a lord more great
than even Bahram was had given.

And the sword from the prince of Hira riven
likewise on Omar was bestowed,
and the fabled sword of the King of Hind
(whose distant fame the ages blind)
bold Asim to his belt may bind.
Torrents of wealth for Islam flowed,
yea, gold and silver now became
unto the Arabs cheap as fame.
Amber and sandal-wood and musk,
and camphor which for salt they took
and having used to knead their rusk
straight as with fear the bravest shook
and straight their very souls did spue.
Loud laughed their fellows at the view,
yet soon such mysteries Islam knew.
But of the splendours one there is
more than all splendid, and I sing
this ere an end to all I bring,
the carpet where did feast the King,
the King of kings, the Chosroës.
Made for a Paradise, emeralds green
are all its meadows, and there wind
pathways of gold its banks between,
yet some be silver, and from trees
of emerald leaf do fowls take wing,
fowls of ruby and sapphire sheen,
or in its branches they do sing
right pleasantly, a rare device
known not to other Paradise,
or they will dip their beaks within
rivers of pearl, and flowers of gem
do hang in blossom over them.
Thus is in all its wondrous ways
this Paradise for an amaze
to Islam and its breadth outspread
is as a meadow's breadth to tread.

And Omar when this paradise
before him at Medina lies
asketh of one and of the other
what should be done therewith, and some
cry : ' Let us keep it as a treasure—
trophy of Islam's arms for ever ; '
but Ali speaketh and doth smother
the wiser voices and they come
and with the shears of shame they sever
the emeralds of the paradise,
they fright for ever from the trees
those birds that sang so soft to please
the King of kings, the Chosroës,
and rent in pieces see it lies
thy carpet, O King Chosroës,
whose kingdom as thy carpet is.
Yea, with the carpet hath it end,
for though upon the field of Rei
and again at bloody Nehavend
did Yezdegird the sword ongird,
yet a like issue had alway
the call to arms, nor will I stay
to tell how hapless Yezdegird
fleeing from Rei to Ispahan
found there no refuge, and to Merv
came and implored the Turkish Khan
and the Emperor of the Yellow Seas,
yet little help gat he of these
and what he gat did little serve,
and o'er the Oxus fled and died
in a miller's hut where he must hide
from Islam's harrying, abject, lone—
begging a crust that lost a throne.
Nor will I tell ye how the name
Amrou in Egypt great became,
and Egypt all to Islam came,

lest this my song be all too long
unto your ears—but these our wars
have true religion for their cause,
for had the faith of Islam been
but folly think ye we had seen
before the hungry, paucous, thin
tribes of our Arabs all the world
down as an airy castle hurled?
Nay, and of Islam better proof
after the Prophet is there none
than the victories by Islam won.
Now, all give ear, for with approof
of ye that hearken, guests of mine,
and of ye that cluster in the shade
longer each passing moment made,
would I bend me down and draw the line
of crimson which from Omar's side
shall lead to Othman and again
dipping in Othman's blood make plain
the chasm which did the world divide,
until the great Muavia mended
those ills which Ali's rule attended.
First then of Omar and the knife
of the slave Feroze which slowly ended
in dripping blood the Kaliph's life.
'Nay, let me bleed, that speedily
with the blessed in Paradise I may be,'
groaned Omar as they bare him home,—
'but see that Abd al Rahman come.'
And in the moment Abd al Rahman
unto the dying Kaliph ran.
'Hail to thee! Hail!' quoth Omar. 'Oft
when 'neath my frown bowed Islam down,
when 'neath my heel were hard things soft,
have I said to thee: Even as this grass
would that the Kaliph Omar was.

Therefore lament not now, my friend,
that with this wound my life hath end,
but ere I seek the welcome tomb,
say, wilt thou govern in my room ?'
Then Abd al Rahman : ' Am I bound
to bear this burden, or may choose ?'
' Nay, by the Lord thou art not bound,'
spake Omar. ' Then I do refuse
such grievous honour.' ' Staunch my wound,'
cries Omar, ' since I may not lose
the Kaliphate ere I have placed it
on shoulders for such burden fit.'
Therefore they staunched the wound and seven
electors chose the Kaliph Omar :
Othman and Ali, Abd al Rahman,
Sad, Talha, Zobeir and Abdallah
his only son, whose vote must be
with Abd al Rahman's. Presently
drank the Kaliph of the date-water
which the leech poured from his jar,
but through the wound the same did ooze,
and Omar to Abdallah said :
' Gently raise up thy father's head
even from the pillow and dispose
upon the ground, for peradventure
this very night the Lord may choose
to spare me what I must endure
if on the rising sun these eyes
must gaze through all their miseries.'
And as Omar bid Abdallah did,
and on the bosom of Abdallah
lay Omar's head, and : ' Hard it were
now for my soul had I not been
a true believer, and each prayer
and every fast have I observed.'
Thus Omar spake, and now between

the silences the whisper fervid :
‘ No other God there is but God
and his Prophet he is Mohammad,’
came to Abdallah, then he sighed
a mighty sigh and Omar died
in the still night. None mightier had
ever the sands of Araby trod
than Omar after Mohammad :
Persia and Syria of Byzance
and Egypt all to Islam’s lance
fell under Omar, and his whip
ruled as the master of a ship
the world of Islam—great and small
alike beneath its thong must fall ;
yet modest in his might withal,
that the traveller in the Great Mosque standing
full oft did ask of a commanding
yet simple Arab if perchance
of the mighty Omar but one glance
unto his curious eyes might be—
and the Arab answered : ‘ I am he.’
When Omar passed three days debated
those choosers, yet the choice belated,
fell not on any, since the choices
for two declared with equal voices :
Othman or Ali : and these were
both to the Prophet very dear,
though Ali was by kin more near,
his very cousin, and Fatima
his daughter Ali’s bed did share,
yet of the Prophet’s sisters two
to wife had Othman and : ‘ A third
right willingly I had conferred
on Othman if the Lord another
sister had granted to the brother
of Rokeya and of Om Kolthûm,’

said the Prophet when too early knew
these sisters twain the common doom.
Now to decide the urgent claim
all Islam to the Great Mosque came,
and Abd al Rahman by his name
called upon Ali first : 'Dost thou,
O Ali, bind thyself even now
to rule by the covenant of the Lord,
to do according to His word
the Prophet's teaching, and the rule
of his successors take for school ?'
Ali made answer : 'Yea, I hope
that as thou sayest I should do
so far as lieth in my scope.'
A weakling's answer ! and Abd al Rahman
turned him and callèd next on Othman :
and for an answer were but few
the words of Othman : 'Yea, I will.'
Then Abd al Rahman turned toward Heaven
his face and cried : 'O Lord, bear witness
that the burden which around my neck is
the same to Othman I have given.'
And having spoken he saluted
Othman for Kaliph, and the people
even as Abd al Rahman did—
but hatred Ali's heart did fill
as he did homage, but he hid
his hatred, and ten year he waited
ere Othman's blood his vengeance sated.
Gentle was Othman and did yearn
Islam with gentleness to rule
as who with honey bears should school,
but weakness weareth gentleness
oft for a cloak, and soon men saw
where in the cloak was weakness' flaw.
But of two Persian towns one word—

Kufa and Bussorah—must be heard,
twin towns which grew with Islam's coming.
And all day long was busy humming
within the walls of Bussorah,
within the Kufan walls, that hive
of drones that loved with words to strive,
to eat the honey bees had won.
Yea, from the Kufans first begun
was the rift in Islam, and they made
fresh progress ever in the shade
with serpents curling in their tongue,
haters of Othman, and they wrung
what terms they would ; one after other
followed their governors, another
aye treading in his fellow's path—
but discontent for kingdom hath
those factious cities lapped in gold,
where all but steadfastness is sold.
And yet another parlous thing,
for Othman was the signet ring
of the Prophet with his name engraven
to Abou Bekr by the Prophet given,
and worn by both and worn by Omar,
by Othman worn, by Othman lost
in the well Aris—this the most
of evil to his cause by far
wrought of his follies, for simple are
the common folk, and when they knew
that though men sifted and men sought
each grain of the well of Aris' sand,
but found the silver signet not,
shook they their empty heads, and : ' Nought
but ill from Othman's ringless hand
shall be for Islam ; ' thus they spake
in folly, but the people make
their silly dreams come all too true

as did the giant, 'neath the yew
who dreamed the tree fell on his head
and dreaming haled it down indeed.
Yea, weak and partial, kind yet proud
was Othman of the Ommeya,
thus with the Kaliphate endowed
in evil hour, and gibe and sneer
spared not the Hashimites, and Ali
was the centre point where they did rally.
And in the Great Mosque on a day
stood Othman with his governors
of Kufa, Bussorah, Damascus,
and Abou Sarh from far Fostât¹
around him—Othman standing thus
spake to the people : ' Naught from me
but all from Omar cheerfully
ye did endure, but now behold
if aught of land or tithe or gold
from any of ye I did take
unwittingly, the same I will
unto the loser now fulfil.
How oft did Omar curse and break
and trample on ye, yet ye bare
from Omar all, from Othman naught,
but oh, I pray ye, cease to jeer
and flout my rule, lest now be brought
Islam to ruin.' Many a sneer
flitted around the mosque to hear
such piteous prayer, but Muavia
came unto Ali, Zobeir, Talha,
and standing by them spake he thus :
' Behold I go unto Damascus
my government, and lo, I leave
this aged helpless man to ye
since that he will not fare with me.

¹ Cairo.

Now do ye keep him and relieve
 the aged Kaliph's great distress,
 whose power and strength are less and less—
 help him and better 'tis for ye.'
 Thus spake Muavia kindly-wise,
 and Ali sware with smiles and lies,
 and those sware with him that they would
 do unto Othman all things good.
 Then they departed, Sad, Muavia,
 Ibn Aamir, and Abou Sarh—
 Kufa, Damascus, Bussorah,
 and Egypt—and as Muavia
 went forth, said Jewish Kab : ' The grey
 mule of Syria wins the day.'
 And at the time no man gave heed
 unto the Jew, though true indeed
 have come his words of prophecy.
 Scarce did there wane a moon or twain
 when rebel bands from Bussorah,
 from Kufa, and from Egypt are
 seeking an entrance to Medina.
 They ask and ask not long in vain,
 for thick with traitors teems the city—
 rebels with nought of care nor pity
 for Othman nor for Islam's fate
 cry that he leave the Kaliphate.
 But : ' Never will these hands do off
 the robe wherewith the Lord hath girded
 the Commander of the Faithful,' answered
 Othman—and dust and stones and scoff
 cast they at Othman when they heard it—
 yet Othman daily preached the word
 of God from the pulpit—till the day
 they drave the faithful few away
 and a heavy stone struck Othman's face
 so that he swooned in his place
 fallen on the pulpit, and Merwan,

cousin of Othman, bare him back
to the palace and the rebels made
of Othman's palace the blockade.
Water, not courage did they lack,
the faithful few, and therefore Othman
climbed to his palace-roof and cried :
'To ye, my brethren, have I given
the well of Ruma, yet denied
is a drop of water unto me
whom the Prophet loved ! how oft his hand
hath rested even in this hand,
this wrinkled hand which aye hath striven
to work ye well'—and now to heaven
upraised Othman both his hands
and prayed that less despitefully
of his people he might used be.
But Ali, Talha, and Zobeir,
well may ye ask where these three were,
though each a son they did afford
to keep o'er Othman watch and ward.
Ali alone could stem the tide
that whelmed Othman, yet did hide
his head within his palace gate
content, he said, to hope and wait
that all with Othman might be well ;
such was his hope—if well be ill—
and soon doth fate the end fulfil.
But for a moment's space to tell
how Om Habiba, the Prophet's widow,
Muavia's sister, touched with pity
upon her mule to carry water
to Othman all alone did go,
but as she passed the rebels caught her,
cut at her bridle with their swords,
and drave her back with angry words—
the kindest heart in all the city.

Yea, Ali, Talha, and Zobeir
well may ye ask where these three were,
but worthier than their mighty sires
their sons did blaze with mighty fires
guarding the ancient, and they made
at the palace gate a barricade.
Then came the news that Muavia
movèd from Syria, and fear
spurred on the rebels and they brake
the barricade and forced the gate
and sought the Kaliph, and they found him
where Merwan and his house surround him ;
and the son of Abou Bekr would slake
his hatred and the long grey beard
seizèd of Othman where he sat
and shook and cursed the agèd man.
But when he saw who first had dared
to use him so : ' My brother's son !
thus had thy father never done,'
said Othman, and the raging hate
of the son of Abu Bekr outran
and he drew back, but Ammar came
and smote the Kaliph that his blood
on the leaves of Al Koran outflowed
which in his agèd hand he held
and the words of the second Sura spelled.
And then they trampled under their feet
the holy Book, but Othman bent
and gathered in his arms the same
all bloody severed leaves ; and fleet
ran the fair Naila, Othman's wife,
brave, young, and beauteous, and they went,
white arms of her around the bent
grey head, to guard her husband's life.
Ammar's or Ashtar's, whose the sword
that smote her fingers and they fell

upon the ground?—a tale to tell
which in the temple of the Lord
within the gates of Damascus city
moved men at arms to tears of pity,
to tears of pity—and the sword.
This done, they stabbed and stabbed again
Othman and leaped upon his body,
and from fair Naila tore her veil
(hands fingerless can ne'er prevail)
till the very sunlight seemèd bloody.
And all her prayers at first were vain
for no man dâred to take the body
for burial, till at last Zobeir,
and Hasan, son of Ali, came
(mark well this last, a fateful name),
and as they bare him to the grave
full many a stone did strike the bier
showing how well those haters hated
whose hatred was with death unsated.
And in the Garden of the Star
buried the bones of Othman are,
and round the murdered Othman's grave
cluster the best of bright and brave
of Othman's tribe the Ommeya.
And as they piled the sand on him
sped through the night o'er the desert dim
one who a ghastly missive bore :
a bloody shift stabbed o'er and o'er,
a bloody shift and fingers four.
Unto Damascus straight he sped
and at Muavia's feet he laid
the sad last relic of their master
and told him of the great disaster.
And in the mosque Muavia nailèd
those relics and the women wailèd,
and the men muttered in their beard

as the all-eloquent shift they neared
and passed aside, yet stood around
the mosque and waited one for other,
and each one muttered to his brother
like thunders rolling under ground.
But in Medina, Othman dead,
duly reigned Ali in his stead,
and to his Persian cities writ—
Kufa and Bussorah—but they
are fickle as the veering wind,
and though their answers both be, Yea,
yet in their tongues do serpents wind
even as for Othman and they sit
hatching all evil.

Ali writ

unto Muavia in Syria.

And first he told of Othman's death,
how Hasan had his life defended
and how the murderers as was fit
unto the arm of justice given
should breathe their last of human breath
in retribution, but he ended :

'Lo, now thy government is riven
from thee, Muavia, and is given
unto Ibn Abbas,' and he signèd :

'Ali, commander of the Faithful.'

Bold were the words that Ali writ,
yea, bolder than their bearer was—

Abbas who never dared to cross
the Syrian border and the order
of Ali met the silent scorn
which is of strength and patience born.

Muavia movèd not but said :

'Wait till we see how long the dead
must wait for justice upon Ali.'

'Wait, let us wait, the Lord will guide us,'

said Ali, and the murderers trod
Medina's streets as though no God
looked down upon them from on high.
But in the Great Mosque of Damascus
armed the Lord his lightning was.
Day clomb upon the back of night
and Ali's messenger must wait
and wonder at Damascus' gate,
for indeed it was a wondrous sight
to see the surging waves of men
controlled by great Muavia.
At the last Muavia took the pen
and writ and the missive gave to one
Cabisa hight and bade him speed
straight unto Ali with the screed.
And when to Ali's side he won
Cabisa bowed him low and then
drew forth the missive : ' from Muavia
to Ali,' ran the superscription
which Ali read and brake the seal—
then silence as he stared upon
the blank white sheet.
' Reveal, I bid thee, straight reveal
the meaning which the blanks conceal,'
commanded Ali, and Cabisa
blenched as he craved to know his fate
if all the truth he should relate.
' Safe is thy life, ambassador,'
made answer Ali.

' Then I speak,'
declared Cabisa : ' know, I saw
full sixty thousand men of war
weeping 'neath Othman's bloody shift
within Damascus and they seek
vengeance for Othman's death from thee
that never deignedst to uplift

thy hand to save an aged man
loved of the Prophet, chosen to be
Kaliph o'er Islam by the free
choice whereunto thou didst agree
of Abd al Rahman.'

 ' Upon me
seek they for vengeance ! seest thou not
that I am powerless, God wot,
as I am innocent, to avenge
the death of Othman, get thee gone,
see thou art safe,' cried Ali. ' None
shall harm thee.'

 To the pulpit mounted
Ali and Syria's breach recounted,
called upon all to fight the foe
that would rend Islam now asunder.
But Talha and Zobeir did go
forth unto Mecca and full slow
filled up the ranks and coming thunder
spake in Aïcha's voice who cried :
' Ill ! ill ! the arms of him betide
that dare not vengeance take for Othman.'
And when men heard her voice began
their hopes for something new and strange
and Talha and Zobeir to her
did join themselves and forth she went
from Mecca : ' Mother of the Faithful,'
and nigh three thousand men did range
themselves beneath their ' mother's ' banner,
and as they fared towards Bussorah
forth from her litter oft she bent
and spake to them of Othman's gore .
and of the Prophet tales galore
told she to them—and eloquent
was Aïcha, mother of the Faithful.
Now in Bussorah Zobeir, Talha

had friends and spies and with Aïcha
to aid full soon the city lay
at their command, but Muavia
joined not unto them nor did Kufa,
and Ali movèd upon Kufa
with his Medinans and when near
Kufa he was, he writ and prayed
that they should be for him to aid.
But at the first the Kufans were
rather for those of Bussorah,
and all their answers came evasive,
until that Ali sent his son—
Hasan he sent, that elder one—
and unto Hasan they did give
what to his father they refusèd.
Why did they so? No man may know
save that the Lord he made them so
those men of Kufa—yea, the vane
compared to them is firmly fixèd.
But though more strong, was Ali fain
to win a bloodless victory,
and with the rebels parleyed he
awhile upon Bussorah's plain,
Zobeir and Talha—and they drew
more near and all seemed smooth again,
and Kufans with Bussorans spake
and both with the men of Medina.
Yea, verily the sky serener
and all things tranquil seemed that night
as peace with the morrow's dawn should break.
But neither recked upon the blight
in Ali's army as they slept
in peace and quiet, for there crept
towards the camps a desperate pair,
Ammar and Ashtar, those that slew
Othman, and well indeed they knew

that never Talha nor Zobeir,
nor Ali if he would might spare
their lives save now they forced the fight
beneath the cover of the night.
Full eighty thousand men they were
asleep beneath the quiet stars
dreaming an end of blood and wars,
when on a sudden yells and screams
burst rudely in upon their dreams.
'Treason !' they cried, the men of Mecca,
and 'Treason !' shouted they of Kufa,
Medina, Bussorah, and all
seized on their arms and furious fighting
filled the grey dawn ; the sword of Ali
which never once he drew in vain
flashed here and there upon the plain
upon the Moslems' heads alighting,
and to and fro the ostrich plume
of Talha flourished in the gloom.
And brother upon brother ran
and 'Treason ! treason !' all did cry,
and smote, nor knew the reason why,
and 'Treason' cried and smote again.
And Talha fell, and Zobeir fell,
and now the rebel rout began.
But as they passed in flight they saw
a camel bristling o'er and o'er
with arrows like a hedgehog's back,
and from the prickly litter shrill
a woman's voice the air did fill.
Hark how she screameth, ' Kill ! kill ! kill !
the bloody murderers of Othman.'
And round the camel the attack
rageth and word flies round : ' In peril
is Aïcha, mother of the Faithful.'
At the word the hero blood again

coursed in each fleeing Moslim's vein,
and lo! a second strife began
around the camel, for they stayed
their flight and gallant stand they made
around the camel ; seventy died
of bluest blood at the bridle's side,
and with the standard many a score
scattered the dusty desert o'er.
But Ali when he knew they died
by hundreds at her camel's side
sent one of his who with a knife
did slit the camel's leg, that thrown
on its knees it fell and gave a groan
of fearsome portent and they bare
the litter to a quiet place
and on the ground they placed it there,
and none dared look upon her face
saving her brother, till the strife
was passed and Ali came alone
unto the litter and bending down :
' May the Lord have mercy upon thee
for what hath passèd here this day,'
said Ali. ' And on thee,' she said,
quickly in answer, but Ali gave
unto Aïcha all of best
within Bussorah and she stayed
awhile to take the needful rest
after the battle ; many a maid
Ali unto Aïcha gave,
and toward Mecca fared the Mother
of the Faithful, and with her fared her brother
and Ali walked a mile or twain
to do her honour at her rein.
And unto Mecca she returnèd,
and many a year the faithful burnèd
sitting within Aïcha's room

where also is the Prophet's tomb
to hear her tales of how he walked
and ate and drank, and slept and talked,
and how he looked when down from heaven
came Gabriel and the word was given.
Thus at the Battle of the Camel,
thus to Aïcha it befell.
But of the Battle of Siffin
come I to speak nor will begin
to tell how Ali forced Muavia
to sally forth from Syria,
nor of the first day's fighting tell,
nor of the second Night of Clangour,
save but to say that Muavia
with Amrou joined and all the valour
of Islam fought together here
one side or other, and there fell
for Ali, Hashim—as he fell
(Hashim, hero of Kadesia)
cried Ammar, cried the regicide :
' O Paradise, how close they hide
their beauties 'neath the point of arrow !
O Hashim, now is heaven opened,
and round thy neck the houris throw
their arms, yea, now are all things brightened
and of his years is Ammar lightened.'
Thus singing, in the thick o' the strife
lost Ammar as he longed his life—
and his years were fourscore years and ten.
These twain were of the mightiest men
e'er born to Islam, yet dismay
did fill Muavia's ranks when they
were 'ware how Ammar passed away,
thinking upon a prophecy :
' By a godless and rebellious race
ended at last shall be thy days,'

once spake the Prophet, but Amrou
 who ever the word of wisdom knew
 answered: 'By Allah, that be true,
 but who brought Ammar here to die,
 who save "rebellious, godless" Ali?'
 Fall they to fighting once again,
 and Ashtar chargeth home, and lo!
 emptied is quiver, emptied bow,
 and hand to hand they fight amain
 and with exceeding valour of arm
 fights Ashtar, since to win or die
 for Ashtar is necessity—
 being of the slayers of Kaliph Othman.
 And in Muavia's heart doth qualm
 follow on qualm, and Amrou saith:
 'Come, let us call on Al Koran,
 let us fix the leaves on the points of lances
 and make appeal unto the faith,
 perchance the enemy will hearken
 and at the least some short reprieve
 from slaughter this our deed shall give.'
 So said so done, and now advances
 Amrou with leaves of Al Koran
 atop his lance and loud he cried:
 'The Law of the Lord! The Law of the Lord!
 The Law of the Lord! let that decide
 between Muavia and Ali.'
 And at the word the surging tide
 of battle stayed and either side
 shouted in unison. But Ali
 when now he saw they fought no more
 stepped forth and spake: 'Those rebels try
 thus to defeat us with their words
 when now they perish 'neath our swords.'
 Thus Ali spake and spake a lie
 seeing that neither side had won

nor lost nor gained on the other.
 But Ali's speaking was in vain,
 nor Ashtar's fiery hot disdain
 hot from the battle worked not on them;
 for when Ashtar cried: 'But yesterday
 ye fought for the Lord and martyr brother
 sped heavenward, now the valiant one
 by this your doing ye condemn
 unto the blazing fires of hell.'
 'Not so,' they answered. 'Yesterday
 we fought for the Lord, but lo! to-day
 for the Lord likewise the fight we stay.'
 Thus worketh the wisdom of Amrou well,
 since upon Ali truce he forces
 and Ashtar stays his fiery courses.
 And to Muavia Ali sendeth
 that he may know the inward meaning
 of Al Koran on the lance-point gleaming.
 And thus Muavia answereth:
 'That ye and we alike should look
 for the will of the Lord in the Holy Book;
 and let an arbiter be found
 by each and each by his word be bound.'
 Now when the men of Ali know
 the answers greatly they rejoice
 and with unanimous loud voice
 for arbiter in the strife they choose a
 ruler of Kufa, Abou Musa,
 Ah! vainly then did Ali plead
 for Abbas vainly did he show
 his hatred of good Abou Musa,
 him whom he once drave forth from Kufa.
 'For Abou Musa, none but he,
 shall be for arbiter between ye,'
 cried out the Kufans; and Muavia
 chose Amrou and the Kaliphs signed

a parchment wherein each resigned
his will to the words of Al Koran,
and where these failed, to tradition.
And to the chosen arbiters
Amrou and Abou Musa clear
six moons to ponder thereupon,
and Duma where to give decision
appointed those the first great signers,
the Kaliphs Muavia and Ali,
and each made oath he would abide
with the decision, and every man
of name or fame on either side
signed saving Ashtar : ' Ne'er again
this for my good right hand could be,
if now I signed such infamy,'
cried Ashtar, murderer of Othman—
thus were we spared a blood-stained pen.
And the six moons passed and Ali came
from Kufa even unto Duma
and came from Syria Muavia
and Amrou came and Abou Musa
and in a separate lone pavilion
discussed the twain, and a mighty throng
upon the great decision waited.
Spake Amrou first : ' Do ye proclaim
unto the faithful our decision,
O Abou Musa,' and : ' Full long
have I with Amrou here debated
what now for Islam best were done,'
said Abou Musa :
' Now hear, O peoples ! we depose
both Ali and Muavia
and now hath Islam ne'er a ruler,
but since from ye all virtue goes,
O peoples, ye must be the chooser
of the new Kaliph !'

Thus he spake
and stepped apart and Amrou brake
the awful silence ; ' Ye have heard,
O peoples, Abou Musa's word !
Behold ! is Ali now deposèd
also by me, but Muavia
him do I now confirm to be
for Kaliph over all of ye,
heir unto Othman and avenger
of Othman's blood, Muavia !'
Yea, thus his answer Amrou throws it
upon the listeners, thus surrender
makes Abou Musa of the power
which in an evil-starrèd hour
came unto Ali. And Muavia
unto Damascus straight returnèd,
but Ali with a heart that burnèd
hied him to Kufa and must fight
first with the rebel Kharejite.
But how he conquered these, yet fell
at the last beneath the vengeful sword
of Ibu Muljame I will not tell.
Nor of his sons, Hasan, Hosein,
how the last fell upon the Plain ;
for lo ! the shadows race toward
each other o'er the charmed space
by this my fountain, and no word
need ye of mine to speak the line
of the house of Ommeya that did rule
first with Muavia, the grey mule
whom now ye honour in Kaliph Merwan,
Kaliph o'er Syria, Egypt, Persia,
and Araby from our Damascus.
Thus came the rule of the world to us
by the word of the Lord and our good sword,
and by the Lord we will hold the same

by the right of the sword and by the name
of Allah and his holy Prophet
who in high heaven is jealous of it,"
said Zobeir, and for a moment's space
fell silence in that echoing place,
as the shades of night drew on apace
and the doves unto the palm-trees flew
and in their branches soft did coo.
And the stars rose and all the heaven
unto the beauteous night was given.
O night, that with thy magic finger
doth touch the world and nought may linger
that dull or mean or vile or base is
in any of thy charmed spaces.
O night, O northern night, inspire
my pen to tell of beauteous dire
and dreadful deeds 'neath moon and star
which in thy fairer heavens are.

Yea for a space were silent there
the man of Ind and eke Zobeir
and John Mansour and passed away
some of that silent company
beneath the palms, but others came
that in the darkness aye the same
seemed the listeners.

On the night
flew the soft bats in circling flight
and from the rosy trees hard by
shrill came to them cicala's cry.
Mansour, the man of Ind, Zobeir,
three do they sit together there,
but of a sudden the moon uplifteth
her face above the lofty wall
and where but now did shadows fall,
shadow to moonlight sudden shifteth.

Three ? said I—three they be no more.
“ Behold ! their company is four.
Who standeth there behind Zobeir ? ”
cried Mansour, “ art thou friend or foe ? ”
And Zobeir turnèd him and lo
illumined with the moony beam,
where a moment past had darkness been
stood one erect.

A long white cloak
shrouded his person, and his face
was hidden 'neath the steady gleam
of a mask of gold, and a turban green
wore he upon his head. He spoke
no word, but steady in his place
stood and the mask on Zobeir gazèd.
Upsprang Al Zobeir all amazèd,
and : “ Who art thou that thus dost dare
creep like a miscreant to my daïs ? ”
Then came a voice from out the mask :
“ Vainly for ever wouldst thou ask
to know my name and many a way is
for me to enter anywhere
that I may will ! Nay, touch me not,
lest sudden to an end be brought
thy days,” the veiled figure said,
and from Zobeir's hand the dagger fell
as raised above his place an ell
standing on air the figure shed
upon that company his spell.
And thus that prophet masked in gold
of past and present and things to come
but most of the blessed Hosein told,
and while he spake were all men dumb
and the stars of heaven slower crept
their course and harkened, and the moon
also did harken and ever kept

her beams upon the veiled prophet,
 whom well she knew but spake not of it.
 And the prophet came to earth again
 and all he said was clear and plain
 unto the ears of those that harkened.
 Please God I have in no wise darkened
 the telling of the tale he told
 whose words and lips and face were gold.
 "Verily now there is no word
 which thou of Islam here hast spoken,
 O Zobeir, that I have not heard,"
 quoth the Prophet Veiled, "and for a token
 will I tell nought to thee of what
 thou hast told before, but passing o'er
 come to the Plain of Kerbela.
 Verily never an hundred year
 pass o'er a people but is clear
 by the will of the Lord the truth of those
 that strive for the triumph of the right,
 and the Lord into confusion throws
 those that would make of day the night.
 Yea, verily this is the word of God
 and upon earth His Foot hath trod :
 'Adam and Noah and Abraham,
 Moses, Mohammad, these I am
 and Ali and his son Hosein
 the Imam slain upon the Plain,'
 said the Lord, and was and is the same,
 one God and mighty be His Name.
 Now harken all, now all give ear
 for what I say must all men hear.
 Behold now, nigh an hundred year
 over all Islam rulers are
 the sons of Ommeya : Muavia
 was first, and falsely hast thou told
 how the vile Amrou's wit cajoled

the folly of Musa, how was sold
 over all Islam Ali's rule
 at the vain bidding of a fool,
 of Abou Musa ; but of Yazid
 his son accursed and the wrongs he did
 unto the Family of the Cloak,¹
 no word of true nor of false was spoke.
 Yea, night for an hundred year hath been
 since Muavia, that man of sin,
 bred Yazid on his concubine,
 and the accursèd Yazid's sperm
 bred on another such the worm
 that hath for name the first Merwan.
 And ever from worse to worst they ran
 the writhing coils of Ommeya's line,
 choking all Islam, for the good
 of Omar² but as a dam withstood
 the raging torrent, and the worst
 over the meads of Islam burst
 when Omar died, for another Yazid
 accursèd too, as was the first,—
 wine-bibber, hunter, panther-trainer—
 reigned over Islam, a disdainer
 of Al Koran, and the faithful harried
 even as a kite, for pieces twain
 of rarest wool for Yazid woven
 two thousand golden dinars paid he
 all from the store of the faithful stolen,—
 thus took he Allah's name in vain.
 And singers twain, his wantons, made he,
 Hababa, Salama, to sit
 one on the right, one on the left

¹ The direct lineal descendants of Mohammad were so called because upon one occasion he threw a fold of the cloak he wore around Ali, Fatima, and Hasan and Hosein, sons of Ali.

² Omar II.

upon his throne, and lo they made
music and song, and drunk with wine
Yazid his raiment bit by bit
rent and of all his senses reft
cried he unto them : ' Say, divine
Hababa, say, Salama mine
will ye that Yazid fly i' the air ?'
Would that even then he had obeyed
his will and unto hell were flown
and of his seed no scion e'er
left to befoul all Islam's throne.
Thus were Islam free of tyrants three,
and of the last, Merwan, who reigneth
even now o'er Islam, nought explaineth
better his being than his name
which unto him from all men came ;
for as Muavia ever was
the Mule of Syria, nigh the same
yet different is Merwan : the Ass.
From east to west the wind doth blow
and as I passed from Khorasan
I saw the ashes all aglow
that hide the Plain of Kerbela.
From east to west the wind shall blow,
yea, from the plain where first begun
the deadly deeds of Kerbela
did steep the world in tears of woe.
From east to west, from west to east
quickly the little flames shall run
greater from less and less from least
lit from the rubbing of the sticks,
in them the west and the east shall mix ;—
the words men spake at Kerbela.
Now hear the truth.
O tattered pages of sorrow's volume
where shall I open, where begin ?

perchance 'tis best I usher in
 gently and softly one by one
 those lilies moving to their doom
 over the sands to Kerbela,
 thus were the teller's duty done,
 or first of Virgin Fatima,
 of Ali cousin of the Lord,
 of the two worlds, of the Lord of Time
 the Prophet speak in scented rhyme?
 But that I fear lest thus I swerve,
 let fall the bridle of reserve
 from out my hand and lose the word
 that shall of things divinest tell—
 Hasan who is the flourishing rose,
 Hosein the herb that ever grows
 green in the meadow of the Prophet?
 Reveal to me, O Nightingale
 Mohammad of God's Unity,
 what best for Islam were to profit?
 what best for him that speaketh be?
 Behold is every man persuaded
 now that the bloom of thy face is faded
 that nowhere can true rose-water
 be found as the beads upon thy forehead,
 Murtaza Ali,¹ Lion of Islam,
 thou ark of honour, holy Imam,²
 sire of the rose of the meadow of truth
 Hasan, and Hosein pearly youth
 of the sea of generosity.
 Ali and Virgin Fatima,³
 thou that wast made for ornament
 to the Prophet's shoulders, counsel me,
 what were the rosiest path I went?

¹ Murtaza Ali means Ali the Approved.

² Imams are inspired leaders of the people.

³ The virginity of Fatima is a dogma of Islam.

O thorny path, the thornless rose
Hosein alone thy winding knows !

Thus I begin when Ali passed
forth from his home, and the waterfowl
held to his garment sorrowful
striving to stay him, for they knew
that if he went to mosque their beak
vainly his kindly hand would seek
which the grain of friendship toward them cast.
Yea verily very sorrowful
were Ali's little waterfowl
as round the Lion of God they flew
prophetical, for well they knew
that Ali the Lion of God's thicket
must fall by the hand of Ibn Muljame,
by the hand of Ibn Muljame the wicked,
lover of Catema whose face is
as the reward of all the virtues,
but on her cheeks her raven tresses
are as the black reward of shame.
Yea, thus did Catema abuse
her beauty, for : 'Thou hast me not
till to my lap thou shalt have brought
the head of Ali on a charger,'
thus unto Ibn Muljame her lover,
to Ibn Muljame the murderer,
did speak the evil Catema.
He strikes and like a crimson lily
rolls in his blood Murtaza Ali.
'And, O my family,' he cried,
'ye of the Cloak, be at my side !'
and like the clustering Pleiades
around the moon their pieties
were unto Ali and he died
and the last word he said was this :

‘ See that to Ibn Muljame not worse is
his death than unto Ali his.’

What of the murder of Hasan
within Medina? this befell
nine year from the death of Haidar Ali,
for in his fear did Muavia
roll in his mind the project fell
and found (may every dæmon ban
his name) the faithless wife Jaida,
whom he did win to be his ally
for a sum of gold, for when in sleep
deep sunken was the Imam Hasan
she whom his sacred love adorned,
Jaida his wife did rub his body
all over with a deadly poison
that when he wake wild courses ran
his blood and to his wife suborned
spake thus her lord : ‘ No more upon
thy breast for ever more shall rest
the weary head of Imam Hasan,
but clad in heavenly robes of green
lo ! I shall ever walk between
the Prophet ’—scant was Hasan’s breath
for upon him was the dust of death
—‘ the Prophet and my Father Ali.
And Hosein ! see, my little Kasim,
my son, the cypress of my orchard,
I beg thee have a care for him
for now are Hasan’s eyes grown dim
and as with asps is Hasan tortured,
O Hosein ! (hear the Father’s whisper !)
I beg thee guard him safe from her.’
Thus spake they there to one another,
Imam to Imam, brother to brother,
and soon the murderer Muavia

may laugh and merry make him here
within Damascus when he knows
that groans and lamentations
unto Hosein are for companions,
who weeps the deepest of all woes,
a brother dear untimely sped.
But though Muavia quiet died
let him think upon what Hasan cried
in his great agony : ' For a night
is this world only, let him wait
till the Judgment Day when we shall meet
before the Lord His Judgment Seat.'

So now I speak of the game of chess
which slew the King of kings, the harmless
Hosein and all those tender roses
who in High Heaven are Allah's posies.
For Yazid when Muavia died
waited to see what might betide
to the other pearl of virtue's sea
(whose name is as a ring to me
fixed in mine ear). And Hosein fled
to the Holy City, and Muslim said :
' May I be offered unto thee
O Hosein for a sacrifice—
an offering for thy perfumed locks—
behold my heart for ever knocks
within my bosom and mine eyes
strain upon Kufa where they are
that call thee Kaliph. If Muslim tries
at the first the temper of the sword,
then may the vicar of the Lord
wield it himself in high emprise.
Let me fare forth even unto Kufa
and see what manner of men they be
that tempt thee there with promises.

Restless as quicksilver Euphrates
 craveth to meet thee ; all the lilies
 of Kufa in thy absence scar ;
 yea, though the whole of Kufa's country
 be as a tulip field to see,
 yet is all thorn without the light,
 O Hosein, of thy countenance.
 'Tis thus, O Hosein, that they write,
 these men of Kufa, and they say :
 " Behold ! unto us every day
 pilgrims do come and cry : Perchance,
 O men of Kufa, ye will deign
 show us the threshold of that palace
 scented with musk and ambergris,
 where now the Imam Hosein is,
 for of this honour we are fain—
 to kiss the blessed Imam's feet—
 thus, oh, thus do the Kufans greet
 the Imam Hosein." " So departed
 Muslim the martyr, and when he came
 to Kufa straightway Ziad knew
 where Muslim lay and seized and threw
 Muslim and Hauni in the dungeon
 of Ziad's palace, and fickle-hearted
 the Kufans round the palace ragèd,
 cried for the doves of Hosein cagèd.
 But Ziad, since he knew not shame,
 dragged the prisoners forth and there upon
 the roof of the palace were beheaded
 Muslim and Hauni, thus he did,
 Ziad the governor of Kufa,
 and thus the Kufan wrath assuagèd ;
 and as it fell each martyr's head
 hurled Ziad down into their midst,
 and every way the Kufans wended,
 their love for Hosein sudden ended.

Thus unto Hosein first thou didst,
Yazid accursed.

Now troops of gloom
invade the heart, the capital
of Hosein's soul, for as Jamshid
had once a cup wherein was limnèd
the time to come, so now the doom
that waits for Hosein on the morrow
feels Hosein drawn in lines of sorrow
upon his heart, yet what befell
Muslim his cousin knows he not.
And ever to Hosein letters brought
from Kufa craved his presence there,
nor spake a word of the murders done.
Nay, Ziad's scribes writ: 'Hopes are fair
and with thy presence all is won.'
With fate for guide the great commander
of the caravan of faith set forth
and with him all his family
and with him forty horsemen were
and an hundred men that went on foot.
Slowly they fare toward the north,
Hosein the Imam by whose name
the throne of God is raised on high,
Abbas his brother, son of Ali,
blossom of the meadow of the good,
Leila his wife, that violet
within the garden of modesty set,
Zeinab his sister honey-lipped,
yet in the sea of sorrow dipped,
Kulsum his sister such another
as Zeinab, for her sacred brother
ready to strew with souls his path,
Kasim the son of Hasan, cypress
of the rose-garden of Ali's heart,
Hasan his brother, he that is

of the eye of Ali chiefest part
and Ali Akbar for companion
upon his journey. Hosein hath—
red-robed Joseph, nightingale
of the rose garden of true sorrow—
yea, Ali Akbar doth depart
with Hosein, with his sire : ‘ For this
were unto all men for derision,
if while ye went, in Mecca I
that well-nigh am a man should fail
my destiny !’ And the bud unblown,
that gemlike matchless little thing
that only hath of laughter known,
Sucana with her arms will cling
round Hosein’s neck and ‘ Father !’ cry :
‘ I thirst ! I thirst !’ and the Prophet’s ring
shall be the only milk to her,
save for the tears of Leila’s eye.
These, ah ! these and more they were
as they from Mecca forth did fare,
and when they drew to Kufa nigh
(within three stages Kufa lay—)
met they with Hûr and Hûr did cry :
‘ O Imam Hosein, thy cousin Muslim
two moons agoe vile Ziad slew him,
and thee he seeketh and would slay ;
therefore be warned and turn and fly
even to the gates of the holy city.’
But Hosein answered him : ‘ O Hûr
even if I would I may not fly,
but with my family abide,
yet if Ziad seeketh for my life
well were it that I turn aside
from the road to Kufa and endure
as best I may, avoiding strife
and seeking peace, since the Kufan men

have beckoned Hosein here in vain,
for with their hearts they are for Hosein
but with their hands would take his life.'
Therefore he turned him to the Plain
which is called Kerbela.

But on the morrow Hûr again
came to the Imam and he said :

' Son of the Messenger of God,
if that a gnat his life may shed
for a phoenix, then would Hûr even now
die for the Lord of the seven¹ and four.'

And Hosein answered him : ' Mayst thou
whose name and deeds are as the sun²
gain an thou willst the martyr's crown.'

' The wings of the phoenix now are o'er
my head,' cried Hûr : ' yea, I am Hûr,
a tower of wisdom and a tower
of strength, the Imam's champion ;

yea, I am Hûr and by the Lord
upon an army with this sword
will the Imam's champion rush alone.

Yea, I am Hûr and will endure
the worst of the worst, of the best secure,
for I have letters signed and sealed
with the truth from the Imam's lips revealed,
saved upon earth, in the world to come
saved by the crown of martyrdom !'

And on the morrow the sun arose
pale, and he sent his trembling ray
to quaver waver round the tent
where with fair Leila Hosein lay,
and as the lilies round the rose
pale flapped the pearly tents of those
whose scent doth mingle with the scent

¹ Eleven Imams according to Shiite tradition succeeded Ali.

² Khyr means sun in Persian.

which from the Prophet's garden blows.
And on the plain afar drew near
Amr son of Sad the conqueror,
friend of the Prophet and the white
banner of cursèd Yazid shook
within his hand for sacred fear
when he the deep green standard saw,
and Hosein upon Amr did look
as the day looketh on the night.
And unto Amr had Yazid sworn
to give the government of Rei
for the bloody head of Hosein borne
unto Damascus by the son
of Sad belovèd of the Prophet.
And twice two thousand men did stay
the word of Amr as he came alone
to the camp of Hosein and : ' O thou
that art but two bows' length apart
from the throne of God, O Imam Hosein,'
spake Amr, ' think thou not evil of it
that Amr the son of Sad must now
lead thee a prisoner to the throne
of Yazid.' But Hosein answered : ' Vain,
O son of Sad, is this thy guile,
I yield me not, but for a while
if so thou wilt I will remain
here on the Plain while thou dost gain
Kufa and thus to Ziad speakest :
" O Ziad, Hosein that thou seekest
waiteth with his at Kerbela.
And if Yazid will unto the war
Hosein will forth and bravely fight
for Islam in the lands afar,
or with his right hand in the right
of Yazid speak, free man to free,
or unto Mecca presently

return him with his family,
 and tranquil there for ever bide.”’
 Thus unto Amr the son of Sad
 Hosein the holy Imam spake,
 and the words of Hosein Amr did take
 unto the stony heart of Ziad,
 (for though a weak and shivering reed
 was Amr not wholly bad indeed,
 and though for certain deep in hell
 ever the son of Sad shall dwell,
 yet must there place for Yazid be
 for Ziad and him whose infamy
 is such that spoken on the wind
 breaketh its wings). And Ziad said
 when Amr had given the message royal :
 ‘To me thou comest without the head
 of the Imam Hosein,’ and did call
 Shimar unto him (lo ! are broken
 the wings of the wind and the name is spoken) :
 ‘Get thee to Kerbela,’ said Ziad,
 ‘and be in the place of the Son of Sad.’
 And unto Kerbela he went,
 whose name I speak not willingly,
 and when Hosein knew that Ziad sent
 the man whose name is infamy,
 already was the day far spent.
 ‘And if thou wilt,’ said Hosein, ‘wait
 till the morrow dawn’—and the man awaited,
 since in the sunlight better sated
 was his lust for the blood of the innocent.
 And the night fell upon the Plain
 and the Imam to his sisters spake,
 to Zeinab and to Kulsum : ‘Take
 O well-belovèd, Ali Ashgar
 and Leila with ye and Ali Akbar—
 nay, do all of ye my family

with the rest fare back to the holy city,
 since only for my blood is fain
 Ziad. And no wise will he stay
 your progress, nay, perchance take pity
 and help ye helpless on your way.'
 Then answered Leila : ' On thy lap
 once more shall rest my head this night
 and as the fragrant aloe wood
 I care not if consumed quite
 be all of Leila.' ' Ah ! why should
 thus speak the Imam,' answered Zeinab,
 ' unto his sisters, when to be
 for the holy Imam sacrifice
 is for them both felicity'—
 and the others spake in kindred wise.
 Then said the Imam : ' Heaven and sky
 and man and all that is born shall die—
 yea, they endure but for an hour—
 all save the presence of God whose power
 having made all things, all shall gather.
 Better than Hosein was his father,
 better his mother, better his brother,
 and in the Prophet of God have they
 and we ensample, and all of ye
 that to the Plain have followed me.'
 Thus the Imam spake and fell to pray
 and having prayed, a trench they made
 behind the camp and with wood they filled it
 to burn on the morrow that thus be shielded
 on the rear the army of the Imam.
 And as the soldiers wrought Hosein
 movèd alone across the plain
 a little space and alone he was,
 when on a sudden stood a horse,
 a horse with a manlike countenance,
 by the Imam's side and he spake : ' I am

unworthy even the dust to kiss
 that 'neath thy holy sandals is.
 Behold to-day with mind at ease
 with nought of sad at all to tease
 my kingly mind I sat alone
 careless upon mine airy throne,
 when on a sudden I heard a noise
 and knew it for the Imam's voice
 praying to heaven for assistance.
 Therefore I come and those with me
 make up a goodly company,
 and if thou deignedst my allegiance,
 upon thine enemies will I fall
 and ere the Imam's eye shall glance
 from earth to heaven shall they all
 be vanquished utterly.' 'Who art thou?'
 answered the Imam all amazed,
 'that here the kindly fates have raised
 to be for aid in my distress?'
 'Jaffur King of the Jinn am I,'
 answered the horseman, 'and a vow
 have I made to do thee loyal service,
 if that thou wilt it, here and now.
 For in the past thy holy father
 (blessed be his name, Murtaza Ali !)
 did unto Tyar who was my father
 a mighty service when the Jinn
 were vanquished at the battle of Bair,
 and unto Islam changed were :
 for then he made my father king.
 Therefore but speak the word and I
 will call from earth and air and sky
 armies of Jinn invincible.'
 Answered the Imam : 'Jaffur, nay,
 that will I not, for treachery
 were it if airy arrows slew

the men of Yazid, while from view
 hid was thine airy company,
 for verily the like warfare
 loveth not Allah nor his Imam,
 who upon earth even now I am.'

Made answer Jaffur : ' I implore thee,
 lord of the worlds of men and jinn
 leave me an hour to change my form in
 and as a man to stand before thee,
 yea, as a man I will return,
 and fight and fall for thee, and earn
 perchance such share of Paradise
 as for the best of the genii lies.'

Answered the Imam : ' None shall stay
 long in this caravanserai,
 which is the world, and on the morrow
 Hosein yon starry path shall follow.
 Therefore, O Jaffur, fare thee well,
 and mayest thou blessing and reward
 reap for thy kindness from the Lord.'

Slowly wearily up the skies
 trailèd the sun with blood-red eyes
 upon the morrow since he cravèd
 vainly of Allah to be savèd
 from such sad sight that veils of night
 should hide the Imam's sacrifice.

And to the army of Amr the band
 of the Imam was as ten to a thousand.
 And to his father Ali Akbar
 spake, and he claimed by right of birth
 to be the first of heaven to profit.
 And the turban of the holy Prophet
 and the sword of Ali, Zul Fakar,
 hung from his belt of slender girth,
 and the coat of mail of his uncle Jaffar
 donned Ali Akbar and he bade

unto his family farewell,
and as a waterfowl in water
immersed in tears was Ali's daughter
Zeinab, and Leila wept and said :
'Shaped as a nest of nightingale,
O Ali Akbar, was thy cradle ;
how often have I watched night-long
thy quiet slumber that no wrong
should come unto my darling son.
And now thou goest forth to die
my eldest son, best loved one.'
And the Imam said : ' God's will be done.'
And Ali Akbar stood before
the trenchèd camp and loud did cry
his right illustrious ancestry,
and his bright name, and then did draw
the sword of Ali, Zul Fakar,
and on the foe he fell and slew
at the first encounter three, then two,
then three, and seven times charged again,
then turned him parchèd to the camp
and cravèd water of his father.
But the cursèd Yazid's squadrons stamp
'twixt Hosein and Euphrates' tide
(whose flood in saltèd tears would glide
since not a drop could Akbar drain),
and in the camp is no more water.
Then said the Imam : ' I had rather
know death ten times than see thee suffer,
my son beloved,' and distraught a
means the poor Father prince of heaven
sought, and a means to him was given :
in the lips of his son his father's tongue
placed he and moisture thence was wrung.
With a last farewell then Akbar fell
upon the foe and the son of Amr

struck him behind, and cut in pieces
 with fifty swords was Ali Akbar
 and every blow they struck meant hell
 for every striker. And Hosein
 wept tears of blood upon the Plain.
 And Abbas, brother of Hosein cried,
 unto the foe : ' Among what tribe is
 custom that water be denied
 unto the enemy ? Your horses,
 your camels, and your elephants,
 open to them the river's course is.
 But unto Zahrah's¹ tribe, whose dower
 was all Euphrates, is denied
 a drop of water ! ' And Amr or he
 whose name is written, ' Infamy,'
 answered : ' No drop of water grants
 Yazid unto ye till the hour
 that ye surrender one ; ' and Abbas : ' Never
 shall we surrender,' and he clove
 the pates of twain that stood him by,
 and striking left and right he strove
 to gain Euphrates that he might
 water the roses of the garden
 whereof he was the chiefest warden
 after the Imam, and on high
 he bare the standard gallantly.
 He fell and the next to be a martyr
 was Hashim and the next was Kasim
 the son of Hasan and his bride
 was Fatima and thus she cried :
 ' O Kasim, dear, our marriage-bed
 see, in the grave it is outspread,
 and I come to thee as a rose
 blown on the autumn breezes goes.

¹ Zahrah, a term applied to Fatima, wife of Mohammad.

But Kasim, say, on the last day
how shall I know thee among those
that are around thee ?' And a murmur
made answer unto Fatima :
'Then shalt thou know me by the shroud
wherein enveloped as a cloud
the limbs of the bridegroom Kasim are.'
Lamenteth Hosein thus : 'How dire
now falleth heavy blow on blow
upon my heart of the hammers of woe :
Yea, Moses upon Sinai moaneth,
and Jesus son of Mary groaneth
knowing my state, for never fire
within the breast may be concealèd
but springeth forth in flame revealèd.
O Solomon, leave Balkis' side
since Kasim martyred leaves his bride ;
and of its nest my heart the bird
is plundered ; and, no sweeter thought
than the rose the nightingale hath got ;
and, when the frost hath killed the rose
then is the bird's heart also froze.'
And the angel Gabriel gazeth on
the body of the martyr Kasim,
and : 'On my soul be malison
if standing thus so near beside him,'
quoth Gabriel, 'can Gabriel tell
whether he angel be or fairy.'
Deep as the Imam thus lamenteth,
behold the small Sucana runneth
from Leila's tent, that lady of ladies,
and with little parchèd lips of baby
for a draught of water from her father
craveth, but : 'Ah ! no water is
for me to give thee, save from eye

filled with the wine of destiny,
 answers the prince of thirsty lip :
 ' There let thy small Sucana sip,'
 pleadeth the child, and Hosein cries
 to the Princess Leila, lady of ladies :
 ' Within the tent perchance some shade is
 unto Sucana ; lo ! I ride
 to gain Euphrates and abide
 not longer what shall now betide.'
 Then on his steed he mounteth up,
 and Leila and Zeinab and Kulsum
 are weeping at the golden stirrup,
 and in the breeze the pennon green
 fluttereth as crowding round they come,
 roses bereft of rosy garden.
 In the one hand scrolls of Al Koran
 beareth the Imam, in the other
 graspeth the sword, Zul Fakar's brother.
 And the Imam speaks : ' Thou God hast been
 my confidence in every grief
 and in adversity relief.'
 Thereat he openeth Al Koran
 that he may read therefrom, but lo
 forth from the enemy's camp a squadron
 gallopeth : be they friend or foe ?
 and their chieftain crieth : ' I be Harro :
 won ! the battle of faith is won
 for me and for mine if with thee and with thine,
 O holy Imam we may fight,
 and to the fringe of thy cloak of green
 cling as on mead of Paradise
 thou walkest as thou shalt this night.'
 Then the Imam answered : ' Thou hast seen
 how heavy on the Imam lies
 the hand of fate, but in Paradise
 verily shalt thou walk this even,

nor hold the Imam's cloak of green,
 since that a cloak of heavenly sheen
 by the hand of the Hûr Al Oyûn woven
 unto each martyr shall be given.'

Thus as he spake there flew an arrow
 from the opposite camp and a voice did cry
 whose sound doth cause the inner marrow
 melt in the bones : ' Bear witness I
 Shimar have aimed at the son of Ali.'

(For though till now right near the strife
 had been the Imam, all were awed
 by the visible presence of the Lord.)
 But with the shameful arrow's flight
 rent was the veil which o'er the life
 of Hosein as in Jewish shrines
 over the holy of holies shines.

And with farewell to the weeping women
 plunged the Imam in the thick o' the fight,
 mounted on Zuljuna, his steed,
 mowed of the Kufans many a weed.

Struck on the head with miscreant sword
 unto his camp returned again
 the visible image of the Lord.

And to his blood-stained breast he took
 his little son, but an arrow strook
 and slew in his arms the tender suckling,
 and to his cloak did his nephew cling,
 of golden curl and jewels were
 bright in his shell-like probèd ear,
 but with a sword the little hand
 that held to him was cut and fell
 (piteous it is thereof to tell)
 where lay the corpse upon the sword.

And the Imam cried : ' We come from the Lord
 and we return again to Him :
 God grant me strength ! ' and to Hasan's son :

‘ Dear child, for this thy fallen limb
in realms of bliss is thy reward
with thy forefathers.’

And around
crowd the enemy, where the very ground
as a green meadow after rain
with blood for water now doth run—
blood of the infant innocent slain—
and in the midst the Imam stands
alone, and in his bleeding hands
swings the great sword and Zeinab cries :
‘ O Amr, canst thou behold the slaughter
of the holy Imam ?’—and briny water
trickles o’er Amr his shameful face
as he turns to hide him from disgrace ;
and the Imam springs upon the foe
and all fall back for shame a space,
and as a lion serpent-bitten
standeth the Imam in his place.

‘ Wherefore have none of ye now smitten
Hosein, the prince of thirsty lip ?’
crieth he of name unspeakable.

‘ Behold will the son of Joshan shew
the place to smite,’ and sunken down
upon his knee in a half swoon
was the blessèd Imam, and Shimar smote,
and with the first blow struck did slip
the sword from the murdered Hosein’s grip,
and now the dagger finds his throat,
and now he falleth in the dust,
and as a mirror¹ from the rust
so fadeth from the meadow of time
Hosein the Imam most sublime.
And as twin nightingales for one rose
for Hosein mourn his sisters twain.

¹ Metal mirrors were used in the East.

Leila her veiling¹ tears and throws
 and runs dishevelled o'er the plain,
 and unto Hosein comes and cries :
 ' Art thou then flown, my nightingale ?
 nay, never so—nay, never so !
 see where the heavenly smile yet flies
 about thy large and dreaming eyes,
 and from thy lips that are so pale
 breathe forth eternal mysteries.'
 Thus as she mourneth cometh he
 whose name is written Infamy,
 and from the body he cuts the head
 even as a butcher, and calleth on
 galloping squadron upon squadron,
 and to and fro and to and fro
 pound they, gallop they every way,
 that of the Imam not a shred,
 saving his hyacinth curlèd head,
 mortal again may ever know.
 But the head upon an halbert spike
 impaleth he that he may shew
 unto his cursèd master Yazid,
 which when he seeth doth Yazid strike
 ferociously upon the mouth
 with his whip and asketh : ' Is thy drouth
 departed, prince of the thirsty lip ?
 if not, behold, thou mayest sip
 even from the Kaliph Yazid's cup.'
 And an ancient Arab riseth up
 and to the tyrant Yazid crieth :
 ' Softly, O Kaliph, for mine eyes
 have seen upon his lips thou striketh
 the lips of the Apostle of God.'

.
¹ For a woman to do this betokened her being so distracted
 with grief that she had lost her senses.

What of the mourning sisters twain
Zeinab and Kulsum on whose bosom
sleeping the small Sucana lies ?
Naked and chained with a chain
over all Araby must they fare
unto Damascus prisoners led ;
and ever before the Imam's head
moves as a beacon of despair.
What of the last male of the race,
the little Ali, Ali the less,
son of the Imam and of Leila ?
Chained is the stripling with a chain
and with his sisters prisoners
unto Damascus must he fare,
but not a syllable doth he deign
unto his brutal captors utter
though of his discourse be they fain,
for though a child, full well he knoweth
his glorious ancestry and showeth
by holding silence his disdain.
What of widowed Leila, Persia's daughter ?
behold the prince of Persia sought her,
and mounted upon Zuljuna
safe from all infamy he brought her
unto her home within Madain.

Thus of the Plain of Kerbela
where of the Family of the Cloak,
of the Family of the Cloak of green,
fell around Hosein seventeen.
Right fain would Yazid deal the stroke
which the last lilies of the meadow
should sever at a single blow,
yet dare not, and the three return
even unto Mecca, and the sight
of the lilies three that flame doth kindle

which waxeth ever and spreadeth west
 as a dragon moves with fiery crest,
 and now doth all of Persia burn,
 which waxeth ever and spreading east,
 doth lick the throne of the braying¹ beast
 yea, waxeth ever nor shall dwindle
 until reduced to ruin crashes
 the house of Ommeya burned to ashes
 for Hosein murdered on the Plain.
 Thus of the Family of the Cloak,
 their fate upon earth hath the prophet² spoke,
 but of the time to come—that day
 when the heaven and the earth shall pass away—
 yet a word will I whisper in your ear.
 Lo ! when the angel Gabriel
 shall have bid the angel Sarafil
 blow the last trump, as a pearly shell
 the earth shall open and yield her dead.
 And near and far and far and near—
 patriarchs, prophets, saints, and sinners,
 must they approach the Judgment-seat.
 And the patriarchs are the beginners,
 and lo, their hearts are filled with dread
 and their bodies burn for the mighty heat.
 Now first behold where Abraham riseth
 and to the Lord his Friend³ he crieth :

¹ Merwan II. reigning Kaliph of all Islam in Damascus at this date, circ. 746 of our era.

² *i.e.*, the masked speaker.

³ In time of famine Abraham sent to beg flour of a friend in Egypt. His servants, failing of their mission, filled the sacks with white sand. Sarah, unaware of this incident, opened one of the sacks and found good flour. Abraham, having previously known of the failure of the mission, fell into a deep sleep. Awakening, he smelt new bread, and asked Sarah whence she had procured flour. 'From your friend in Egypt,' she said. 'Nay,' said Abraham, 'it must have come from my friend God Almighty.'

'Abraham, Lord, thy Friend, I am :
 See, Lord, I burn, have mercy on me—
 but to my son, to Ishmael
 do Thou, O Lord as seemst Thee well.'
 And to the Lord shall Ishmael cry :
 'Burning, O Lord, a-burning I ;
 do Thou, O Lord, unto my sire
 what seems Thee good, but quench my fire.'
 Lo ! Jacob riseth from the grave,
 and : 'Save me, merciful Lord, O save,
 for lo, I scorch, but unto Joseph
 do Thou as to Thee well beseemeth ;'
 and of his father Joseph speaketh
 even as Ishmael of his.
 What ruddy countenanced King is this ?
 Hark ! now he crieth : 'I be David :
 O Lord I burn ! O Lord be kind,
 even as of old to Thy servant David,
 but the throne of Solomon, let the wind
 bear it wherever Thou shalt bid.'
 Solomon crieth : 'Lord upon
 King David let thy will be done,
 but upon me, O Lord, have mercy,
 that was the wise King Solomon.'
 Thus shall they speak, each patriarch,
 but hark to the voice of Gabriel, hark !
 'O thou the Prophet that sitt'st alone,
 above the Lord, His vasty throne,
 deign thou, I prithee, from Paradise
 some steps to take and grant the boon
 to bring with thee thine orbèd moon
 Ali.' And to the Prophet cries
 Ali : 'May I a ransom be,
 Sovereign of religion, unto thee.
 Raise up even now thy voice to praise
 the one Lord absolute, then be seated

within the place of the mediator,
then let the angelic register
speak forth the sins of every sinner
that unto each his pain be meted.'
Then shall the Prophet of God upraise
his voice and speak : ' Be praise to Thee,
O Lord, from all eternity,
standard of glory and of praise,
praise be to Thee that hath thought well
to appoint Paradise to the good
and to the evil-doer Hell !
Lo ! the reward of good is good.'
Then shall the sinners come and cry
unto the Prophet : ' O have pity
upon thy people, for we burn,
O thou the messenger of God !'
And unto Ali : ''Tis the day
of intercession : rend we pray
O Ali, lion of God's wood,
thy garments, Ali ; come and turn
from us the flames that burn, that burn !'
And the Prophet shall cry to the Lord : ' Have mercy
on this my people that have trod
the way of sinners, yet have mercy,
O Lord, on these that followed me !
O Lord, have mercy ! Lord, have mercy !'
And Ali crieth loud : ' Have pity
O Lord, on these Thy Prophet's people !'
But to the Prophet Gabriel
shall speak : ' O Prophet, it were well
if to some very distant place
ye did withdraw, for if with fire
burned are thy sinful people's bodies,
yet this the judgment just of God is
and all as nought to the burning mace,
to the torments whereunto this fire

is as a paradise.' But the Prophet
 shall hurl away his cloak and rod,
 aye, and his turban, for 'No profit
 of these hath the Apostle of God,'
 shall cry Mohammad, 'when in dire
 damnation all my people burn !'
 Yea, then the Prophet of God shall spurn
 mantle and rod and turban green.
 But Gabriel crieth : 'Take, O Prophet,
 thy cloak and rod and turban green
 unto thee, for a means, I ween,
 remaineth yet whereby to raise
 thy followers from those flames that blaze.
 If that thou willest now to save
 thy people, from his sandy grave,
 call Hosein forth from Kerbela.'
 Hear the Prophet cry : 'Arise, O Ali !
 beat mournfully upon thy head !
 O Fatima let thy prayer be said,
 best among women ! let him rise
 Hosein, the light of the Prophet's eyes !'
 And hark how loud his people cries :
 'Ya ! Hasan ! Hosein ! Hosein ! Shah !
 we sinners yet thy people are !'
 And Fatima unto Kerbela,
 and Ali unto Kerbela,
 and Hasan from his grave arisen
 shall fare forth unto Kerbela.
 And to her son shall Fatima cry :
 'Come forth, my dearest, from thy prison,
 come ! 'tis thy mother Fatima ;
 come ! thou wilt not her prayer deny.'
 And from his grave shall Hosein come,
 and : 'Mother dear thy voice I hear,'
 shall Hosein answer ; 'be I ransom
 O mother for thy voice remembered.

But see, O mother, stuck all over
with arrows now and all dismembered
once was my body, come together
since that it is the Judgment Day.'
'Would that again thy mother went
beneath the earth in such sad state
to see thy body delicate !
O Hosein mine, but thy reward
hast thou,' quoth Fatima, 'of the Lord.
Behold ! 'tis given thee to relieve
those that in thee and in thy sire
and in the Prophet did believe,
yet are consumèd with hell fire.'
Then to his son shall Hosein cry :
'Come forth my son ! come Ali Akbar !
bring with thee Hûr, Abbas, and Jafar,
Kasim and Muslim : all that are
equally martyrs for the faith.'
Then robed in robes of green shall stand
the Family of the Cloak together.
See now where Gabriel coming saith :
'With a message from the Lord come I !
Behold ! the Key of Paradise
I place, O Prophet, in thy hand.
Of all men, none hath suffered ever
as Hosein, none hath e'er obeyed
in all things in his faithful service
as Hosein, lo, the key that is
within thy hand I give for prize
to Hosein, him whom I have made
the mediator unto all
thy people.'

Then shall the Prophet call
joyfully unto the Imam Hosein :
'O Hosein, see what thou dost gain !—
to set our people free from pain !

Go thou and set those sinners free
who in their lives one tear for thee
have shed, who have in any way,
O Hosein, been to thee for stay,
who ever did their steps engage
unto thy shrine in pilgrimage
or mourned for thee, or poesy
writ once in tragic words of sorrow :
take thou the key and set them free.’
Then shall the Imam open wide
the pearly gates and loud shall call :
‘ Come all of ye that yestertide
did weep, to-day is as to-morrow,
yea, now to all eternity
is joy, and rest, and peace for all.’
Thus the Imam maketh intercession
at the Judgment Day for many a nation.
O Lord, I pray let thy curse be on
Omar and Abou Bekr and Othman,
usurpers all, and on Muavia,
Amrou and Abul Aur and Walid,
and Abdul Rahman the son of Khalid,
but above all accursed be Yazid
for that thy sacred blood he shed
upon the plain of Kerbela.”

Thus the mask of gold his discourse ended,
and from the marble court he wended,
and as he went some cried : “ Behold !
'tis Antichrist,” and others, “ Nay !
'tis the Prophet's self come back to hold
true discourse ere the Judgment Day.”
'Twas thus, with curses and with blessings
that the masked prophet went his way,
nor did any dare his course to stay,
for terror held them, till Zobeir
rose in his place and : “ Reasonings,”

quoeth he, "with one so mad as he
methinks were vain, else easy were
to shew the Persian how well able
to change true histories to fable.
Certès had great Muavia scorned
Hasan, the many-wivèd prince,
to slay with poisoned treachery.
Nay, of some wifely jealousy
died Hasan, and Muavia mourned
Hasan and fain had the murderess punished,
but knew not which of many, since
so heavy is the harem's shade.
Hosein the prince whereto they cry,
these Persians, as to God on high !
And the men of Mecca rave and scream :
' Hasan ! Hosein ! ' behold they dream.
Nought was Hosein but a vain pretender
unto the throne of the Kaliphate,
whereof his brother made surrender
unto the great Muavia,—
and his father Ali bowed to fate,
nor waged war on Syria
after the last, the great decision
at Duma whereof I have spoken.
But as for Hosein's treason one
drave him thereto whereof the name
is as the speaker's writ the same,—
Zobeir, and the Kufan's pledges broken
were broken well and this the reason :
to keep those pledges had been treason.
Ziad and Shimar, shameless pair,
outstrode the will of the Kaliph Yazid
who ne'er ordained the crimes they did
at Kerbela, and when were brought
Zeinab and Kulsum to Damascus,
Yazid the Kaliph spake them fair

and ever afterwards he sought
 their welfare, and for proof he sent
 both back unto the holy city
 with their brother's child, the lesser Ali,
 hight now the ornament of the pious
 by the Persian upon worship bent.
 But of our rulers what he told
 is as a face in a hollow mirror
 reflected round and fatly rolled
 or lengthwise drawn and ever thinner,
 made by the trickery of art
 to mock the truth and turn the heart
 from the right path of reverence due
 to the house of Ommeya ; and of all
 he muttered of a war to come
 is the last word from Persia dumb ;
 aye, never further from its fall¹
 than now our mighty house which grew
 from the grey mule Muavia.
 And since he curseth, hear Zobeir :
 Lord, I beseech thee, blessed be Omar,
 and Abou Bekr and the murdered Othman,
 verily blessed these three are,
 and blessed be Muavia.
 Lord, I beseech thee, cursed be Ali
 and Ashtar, Othman's murderer,
 Abbas and Hasan and Hosein,
 and cursèd be the last again,
 well killed upon the Persian plain—
 well killed and yet that will not lie,

¹ Zobeir is wrong here and the masked prophet right. The Ommyad Kaliphate was overthrown three years later by the Abbâssids at the battle of Zab in 749. The Abbâssids slew every descendant of Ommya, save one, who fled to Spain, where he established a dynasty. The Abbâssids were collaterals of the Fatimites (Hosein's family) being descended from the Prophet's uncle. The first Abbâssid Kaliph was fifth in this descent.

but riseth ever up in vain
to spot our Yazid's memory."

Thus ended Zobeir, and the faint
white light of dawn was in the east
and the starry listeners grown dim,
and the doves about the palm-trees flitting
new with the day as the Christian saint
bowed to Zobeir and thanked him
for rest and respite and the feast.
"And ere I pass away 'tis fitting,"
quoth the saint, "that a word of blame from me
fall heavy on the blasphemy
of the figure in the mask of gold.
Now harken all ! what he hath told
of the Prince Hosein and the Judgment Day
and the key of Paradise and fire
that burns the patriarchs and the ire
of the Most High, but most the fable
of intercession, angereth me.
Behold ! 'tis evident blasphemy :
Yea, from the Christ hath the Persian stolen."
But the man of Ind uprose and smiling
quoth : "Let us each be charitable,
O saint of Christ, for were thy fable
once from its yellow robes unfolden,
methinks not more there would remain
of Christ than of the Prince Hosein
in the seamless robe in Heaven hiding,
though verily the robe were green.
Therefore let cease thine ardent chiding,
and know that many a Christ hath been
yea, many a Christ and Prince Hosein,
and many such shall be again.
But higher shall that Christ uprise
who knows there is not Paradise,

nor heaven nor hell for man to gain
save by himself and so shall teach
the eightfold path of truth to each
which leadeth to that shoreless sea
where from the dream of self set free
shall the blessed be yet cease to be
as mortals willing, wishing, sinning,
joying and sorrowing and beginning :
merged in Nirvana utterly."

Thus the Man of Ind began and ended
and bowing low to both he wended
even as the rhinoceros

his way amid the jungle goes
past the tinkling fountain and the faces
of those that filled the marble spaces
toward the bottom of the court.

And the saint rose up again and blessed
Zobeir for all and took farewell :

"For," said he, "Zobeir by thee,
old friend, is Mansour happy brought,
his penance purged, his body rested,
his soul perchance from pains of hell
saved ;" and Zobeir embraced and bade
farewell to the friend in such strange wise
met in Damascus in strange guise
and freely offered all he had
unto his friend—his slaves and horses—
to bear him to the Laura back.

"Nay," said the saint, "the monk his course is
step by step on the stony track."

And down the marble court he wended
and the Meeting of the Creeds was ended.

For Zobeir rose up from his place
and to the inner palace hied
and the listeners through the porch did glide
into the street and for a space

save the tinkling fount and the doves that cooed
all was a marble solitude.

With the morrow's dawn St. John did win
back to the Laura, purged of sin,
and Isumbrand full soon within
the solemn aisles of the chapel lies,
and the same dirge the monks make rise
to waft his soul upon its way
as made St. John upon a day,
and those be smiles about their eyes
as for St. Isumbrand they pray.

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